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At 59%, Phase 6 records lowest turnout

West Bengal records highest turnout while Uttar Pradesh sees the least voters at 54.03%

A voter shows her inked finger in New Delhi, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The sixth phase of Lok Sabha elections for 58 parliamentary constituencies saw a cumulative voter turnout of 59.06 per cent. It is the lowest among all the phases so far.

According to the poll body, West Bengal recorded the highest voter turnout (77.99 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (54.03 per cent) the least among the states; Jammu and Kashmir recorded 51.35 per cent.

Several dignitaries, including President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, and politicians cast their vote in the national capital, while in Haryana, many prominent wrestlers like Babita Phogat and Yogeshwar Dutt exercised their franchise in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha polls on Saturday.

Several politicians, including Delhi Chief Minister and AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal and senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, were seen at polling stations in Delhi along with their family members.

The sixth phase of Lok Sabha polls includes eight seats in Bihar, all 10 seats in Haryana, one seat in Jammu and Kashmir, four in Jharkhand, all seven seats in Delhi, six in Odisha, 14 in Uttar Pradesh, and eight in West Bengal. A total of 889 candidates are in the fray.Voting for the 42 Assembly constituencies in Odisha was also conducted in the sixth phase. Assembly elections are held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha elections in the state. All parliamentary seats in Delhi and Haryana went to polls in this phase. Polling has already been completed on 428 parliamentary constituencies for 25 states and UTs in the first five phases of General Elections. Lok Sabha elections will be completed on 1 June after the seventh phase of polls in which voters from 57 constituencies will exercise their franchise. The results will be declared on 4 June.

—PTI

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Violence, clashes, protest in WB again

KOLKATA, 25 MAY

Scattered incidents of violence were reported from some areas in the eight Lok Sabha constituencies of West Bengal, where polling is underway for sixth phase.

Election Commission received 954 complaints until 11 am from different political parties, alleging EVM malfunctions and agents being stopped from entering booths, they said. The poll panel, however, claimed that voting has been peaceful so far.

Senior BJP leader and its Jhargram candidate Pranat Tudu claimed his convoy was attacked in Garbeta area of West Midnapore district, following which security personnel escorting him were injured and had to be hospitalised. It is alleged that TMC goons exercise their fundamental rights to stone pelting.

Clashes reportedly broke out between supporters of the ruling TMC and BJP in the Ghatal constituency over stopping polling agents from entering the booths.

BJP candidate Hiran Chatterjee claimed that TMC goons are running havoc in the voting process. BJP activists also protested on the road and set tyres on fire in the area.

Sitting TMC MP Dev, who is seeking re-election from the seat, however, rubbished the allegations. Sporadic incidents of violence were also reported from various parts of Kanthi constituency. Meanwhile, a group of people shouted slogans against BJP candidate and former Calcutta High Court judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay when he reached the polling booth in Tamluk. A large contingent of security personnel was deployed to bring the situation under control. In Bankura, Union minister Subhas Sarkar faced protests while visiting one of the booths. *—PTI*

'BJP tag' on EVMs in WB

TMC shared images of EVMs with paper tags bearing BJP's name and alleged tampering. EC claimed the candidates and their representatives sign address tags during poll preparations and since only BJP candidate's representative was present during commissioning, their signature was obtained. *—PTI*

PDP workers detained, Mehbooba protests

BIJBEHARA, 25 MAY

PDP President Mehbooba Mufti on Saturday protested outside a police station in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag, where polling is underway in the sixth phase of Lok Sabha elections, against alleged detention of her party workers and polling agents.

She also claimed that outgoing calls on her mobile number have been suspended.

Police, however, said those detained are over ground workers (OGWs) and the action was taken to ensure smooth conduct of elections. Mehbooba, is among 20 candidates in the fray from Anantnag-Rajouri constituency. The protesters raised slogans against the Jammu and Kashmir administration and demanded that those detained be immediately released. She said this kind of "rigging" was witnessed in 1987 which many believe led to the eruption of militancy in Kashmir. Police said only a few people with a "tainted" past record and who can pose a threat to law and order on polling day have been detained. Police resorted to mild lathicharge to disperse the swelling crowds. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

President Droupadi Murmu shows her marked finger in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

DELHI VOTERS SAY NAMES MISSING FROM LIST

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The excitement of casting votes in Lok Sabha polls was short-lived for some electors in Delhi, who found their names missing from the voters' list on Saturday, even as they claimed that their documents were in order.

Younus Salim and Azim Khan, employees at the Rashtrapati Bhawan, went to exercise their franchise at Dr Rajendra Prasad Kendriya Vidyalaya in the President's Estate only to find their names missing from the voters' list.

"My husband's name is missing from the list. I have cast my vote and even my children could cast their votes," said Shakeela Khan, Azim Khan's wife. "We were here to vote for a change in the country but my name was not there in the list. Only my name was missing while the names of my family members were there. I have valid documents. " Azim Khan said. Salim showed his Aadhaar card and voter card. "I had cast my vote in the 2022 MCD polls. How is it that my name is not there in the voters' list?" he said. *—PTI*

MLC polls: BJP expels Raghupathi for rebellion

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

BJP on Saturday expelled former MLA and party leader Raghupathi Bhat with immediate effect for contesting against the party's official candidate from the South West Graduate candidate in the Legislative council elections. President of State BJP Disciplinary Committee Lingaraja Patil announced Bhat's expulsion citing as a violation of party discipline. The order added- is actions have caused considerable embarrassment to the party, prompting the disciplinary committee to take stringent action. ***—Salar News***

Man rapes 7 using voice-changing app to pose as woman

SIDHI, 25 MAY

A 30-year-old man has been arrested in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi for allegedly raping at least seven girls after posing as a woman college teacher and calling them in with scholarship funds, police said on Saturday. Most of the survivors belong to tribal communities. Brajesh Prajapati, the accused, used a voice-changing app to sound like a woman while talking to his potential victims on phone, police said. While Chief Minister Mohan Yadav ordered probe by a special investigation team (SIT) into the case, the accused's unauthorised house was demolished following the arrest. Three associates of Prajapati have also been arrested. Prajapati called girl students while posing as a woman college teacher from a collage at Tikari, and asked them to meet so that they could get a scholarship, the police official said. `Her son' will take them to her house, the caller would tell the girls.After the crime, he would snatch away the girl's mobile phone. *—PTI*

Mumbai to San Francisco AI flight delayed by 25 hrs

MUMBAI, 25 MAY

Air India's flight to San Francisco from the city took off on Saturday after an inordinate delay due to multiple reasons. The flight, which was originally scheduled to take off at 4pm on Friday, was delayed by over 25 hours, due to multiple reasons and rescheduled for Saturday. Again on Saturday, the flight was initially expected to fly out in the morning but finally took off for San Francisco around 5.30pm, according to an official. *—PTI*

3 Naxalites killed in Ch'garh, 33 surrender

RAIPUR/BIJAPUR, 25 MAY

Three Naxalites were killed in encounters with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar region on Saturday, police said.

Two Naxalites were gunned down in Bijapur district, while another was neutralised in neighbouring Sukma district, they said.

In Bijapur, the gunfight occurred in a forest near Jappemarka-Kamkanar villages under the Mirtur police station limits, where a team of District Reserve Guard (DRG) was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, an official said.

The operation was launched based on a tip-off about the presence of Pandru, the in-charge of the west Bastar division supply team of Maoists, and Bhairamgarh area committee member Joga, along with 10 to 15 armed Maoists in the area, he said.

After guns fell silent, the DRG team recovered the bodies of two Naxalites along with weapons, wireless set, bags, Maoist uniform, medicines and materials of daily use from the spot, he said.

In another encounter, a Naxalite was killed by the security forces on a forested hill near Belpochcha village in Sukma district, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan said.

Maoists have called for a bandh on 26 May in the Bastar region to protest against the alleged fake encounters.

Meanwhile, As many as 33 Naxalites, three of them carrying a cumulative bounty of Rs 5 lakh, surrendered before security forces in Bijapur district. The Naxalites turned themselves in before senior officials from the police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). *—PTI*

A DAY ON THE PITCH

US Ambassador to the US Eric Garcetti plays cricket with India's Blind Cricket Team in Bengaluru on Saturday as they prepare to promote blind cricket in the United States **PHOTO: PTI** ***>>>More on Page 5***

Children among 26 killed in Rajkot game zone fire

RAJKOT, 25 MAY

At least 26 people, including children, were killed in a massive fire that swept through a game zone teeming with people enjoying a summer vacation outing in Gujarat's Rajkot on Saturday, officials said.

Relief and Rescue operations have been underway at the affected TRP game zone for more than five hours after the blaze erupted at a fibre dome constructed for gaming activities at around 4:30 pm, officials said, adding that the structure collapsed due to the huge fire.

According to eyewitnesses, several people, including children were playing games at the game zone, located on Nana-Mava Road, when the tragedy struck.

Rajkot Collector Prabhav Joshi said the Fire Control Room received a call at around 4:30 pm regarding the blaze at the game zone.

"Fire tenders and ambulances rushed to the spot to douse the flames. The fire caused the collapse of the structure, and debris is being cleared," Joshi added.

However, the exact cause of the massive fire is not known.

The state government has assigned the investigation to a Special Investigation Team (SIT).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed grief at the loss of lives in the fire tragedy and said the local administration is working to provide all possible assistance to those affected.

Modi spoke to Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel to enquire about the rescue and relief efforts.

Patel has announced an ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh to the kin of each of the deceased and Rs 50,000 to each injured. He also set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the incident. After the fire broke out, Rajkot Police Commissioner Raju Bhargav told media persons that the cause of the blaze would be investigated and that a message had been issued to all the gaming zones in the city to close operations. Patel further said that any kind of negligence would not be tolerated and assigned the investigation of the entire incident to a Special Investigation Team (SIT). *—PTI*

Several people including children were playing games when the blaze erupted **PHOTO: PTI**

SCRIPTS HISTORY

Anasuya wins best actress at Cannes

CANNES, 25 MAY

Anasuya Sengupta, one of the lead stars of Bulgarian director Konstantin Bojanov's Hindi-language movie 'The Shameless', has created history by bagging the Best Actress award in the Un Certain Regard category of the 2024 Cannes Film Festival.

Sengupta, who hails from Kolkata, is the first Indian artiste to win the category's top acting honour, marking a significant milestone for India.

In her acceptance speech on Friday night, Sengupta dedicated the award to the "queer community and other marginalised communities" for bravely fighting for their rights all over the world.

Anasuya Sengupta won the award for Hindi-language movie 'The Shameless' **PHOTO: PTI**

- The win at Cannes is a landmark moment in Sengupta's career. She earlier played a supporting part in 2009 Bengali movie 'Madly Bangalee', directed by Anjan Dutt.

The win at Cannes is a landmark moment in Sengupta's career. She earlier played a supporting part in 2009 Bengali movie 'Madly Bangalee', directed by Anjan Dutt, and worked as a production designer after shifting to Mumbai.

'The Shameless', which had its premiere at Cannes on 17 May, forays into a dark, disturbing world of exploitation and misery in which two sex workers, one who bears the scars of her line of work, the other a young girl days away from ritual initiation, forge a bond and seek to throw off their shackles.

Sengupta plays the central character of Renuka, who escapes from a Delhi brothel after stabbing a policeman to death and takes refuge in a community of sex workers in northern India, where she meets Devika (Omara), a young girl condemned to a life of prostitution.

The actor celebrated her win on Instagram, where she posted pictures with Un Certain Regard jury head, Canadian director Xavier Dolan, and German-Luxembourg star Vicky Krieps. *—PTI*

CCB arrests one more for B'luru rave party

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

Central Crime Branch sleuths, probing the rave party hosted at a farmhouse here, have apprehended one more person, taking the total arrests so far to six. The sixth accused hailing from Hyderabad was among the organisers of the event, police sources said on Saturday. The CCB raided the dusk-to-dawn party on May 19, which 103 people had attended, including a Telugu film actress. The blood samples collected from those who attended the rave party at a farmhouse have tested positive for narcotics. MDMA (Ecstacy) pills, MDMA crystals, hydro cannabis, cocaine, high-end cars, DJ equipment, including sound and lighting worth Rs 1.5 crore were seized by the police. —*PTI*

Bitcoin scam case: Hackers held in Tumakuru

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

A Special Investigation Team probing the bitcoin scam has booked hackers Srikrishna alias Sriki and Robin Khandelwal under the Karnataka Control of Organised Crime Act (KCOCA). Sriki was arrested by the Tumakuru police after his role was found in stealing 62 bitcoins worth Rs 32 crore on 8 May. Rs 32 crore worth bitcoin transactions took place in Tumakuru. In a statement, Criminal Investigation Team said that since Sriki and Khandelwal were involved in many such cases, it has been decided that they should be booked under section-3 of the KCOCAThe prime suspect Sriki was accused of hacking the state government's e-procurement site and siphoning off over Rs 11.5 crore. There were also charges of cryptocurrency theft, drug peddling and cyber fraud relating to the case. —***Salar News***

Auto driver dies after falling into Mangaluru drain

MANGALURU, 25 MAY

An autorickshaw driver died after his vehicle fell into a stormwater drain, police said on Saturday. The tragedy occurred on Friday night when Deepak Acharya's autorickshaw skid and fell into the drain while negotiating a curve near Kottara under Urwa police station limits, they said. Since Thursday, there has been heavy rainfall in Mangaluru following which the drains were overflowing. The man (40) drowned in the drain, a senior police officer said. A case has been registered against concerned officials of Mangalore City Corporation. —*PTI*

Driver makes reel in moving bus, suspended

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

North Western Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (NWKRTC) suspended the driver and conductor for making a reel in a moving bus which went viral on social media platforms.A departmental inquiry has been ordered against them. Driver Hanumanthappa and conductor Anita made a reel on Thursday in which the driver is seen holding an umbrella while driving the bus creating an impression that the bus roof was leaking due to heavy rains. As this video went viral, the netizens slammed the NWKRTC saying the state transport buses were in poor condition making the passengers suffer. While speaking with ANI, NWKRTC Managing Director Priyanga said, "NWKRTC inspected the bus and it was found that the roof of the bus was not leaking and the driver and conductor had made the reel for entertainment. The NWKRTC, however, has suspended both the driver and conductor for showcasing the NWKRTC in a poor light." —***ANI***

PMO did not inform MEA about CM's letter: HM

EAM said MEA got request to quash Prajwal's passport on 21 May

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Saturday took a dig at the Centre, a day after the Ministry of External Affairs said the state government's request to impound the diplomatic passport of absconding Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna was received only on 21 May.

He sought to know what happened to the letter sent by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April, seeking revocation of the passport of the suspended JDS leader.

Reacting to a reported interview of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar that his ministry got the request for cancelling the passport only on 21 May, Parameshwara told reporters: "I too saw the media report. If he (S Jaishankar) said so, then it means that the PMO did not inform the Ministry of External Affairs."

"He wrote the letter in April itself and the EAM says he received it on 21 May. What happened to the letter in the Prime Minister's Office? Didn't it get the value it deserved or did the PMO not inform the External Affairs Ministry?" Parameshwara asked.

Taking a swipe at the Union government, he said, "We can see how the Centre is functioning."

PHOTO: PTI

- He sought to know what happened to the letter sent by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April, seeking revocation of the passport of the suspended JDS leader

He noted that once the diplomatic passport is cancelled, Prajwal has to return to India as he will lose the immunity to stay abroad. Prajwal, who is the grandson of JD(S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda and the NDA candidate from Hassan Lok Sabha segment, is facing charges of sexually abusing women. Prajwal reportedly left for Germany on April 27, a day after Hassan went to polls, and is still at large. —*PTI*

Why didn't CM probe son's death in Belgium: HDK

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

Senior JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy on Saturday raked up the death of Siddaramaiah's son in a foreign country eight years ago, seeking to know why the Chief Minister did not order a probe into it. The statement drew a sharp reaction from Siddaramaiah, who termed it Kumaraswamy's 'foolishness' to rake up his son's death.

Rakesh Siddaramaiah had died due to multiple organ failure in Belgium on 30 July, 2016 during the first tenure of Siddaramaiah as the Chief Minister.

Lashing out at him for his comment that Hassan JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna fled the country with the knowledge of his family members, including his grandfather HD Deve Gowda, Kumaraswamy said other than keeping the issue alive, no efforts are being made to bring out the truth in the sexual abuse case.

"The Chief Minister's son had also gone abroad and met with an accident. Which event he had gone for? Did he take Siddaramaiah's permission?" Kumaraswamy asked.

Senior JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy PHOTO: PTI

"Why was it covered up? Did he send him abroad?"

Kumaraswamy also asked him to disclose details of the number of people who had accompanied Rakesh during his foreign trip in 2016.

Kumaraswamy alleged that the Prajwal sexual abuse case was being used to "finish off" his family politically.

In his reaction, Siddaramaiah said, "Rakesh had died eight years ago.

It is his foolishness to raise Rakesh's case."

"Rakesh died in 2016. What is the connection between that case and Prajwal's case? His (Kumaraswamy's) nephew (Prajwal) is a rapist," he said. —*PTI*

Eshwar says PM's ₹80L hotel bill will be settled amicably

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre said that the hospitality bill of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who arrived at Radisson Blu Plaza in Mysuru last year, which runs up to Rs 80 lakh, will be settled amicably, on Saturday.

Following media reports that the hotel where Modi had stayed has threatened to find legal recourse to recover his dues, Khandre said he will try to resolve the issue amicably.

"The cost of the three-day event last year was Rs 6.33 crore. Out of this, Rs 3 crore had been received and still Rs 3.33 crore is due from National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). He said that the stay at star hotel cost was about Rs 80 lakh," Khandre's office quoted him as saying in a statement.

The minister added that the officials of the forest department were in the committee formed locally to manage the hospitality in the wake of the Prime Minister's visit to the State.

He explained that NTCA had actually said that they would bear the entire cost of the programme.

"NTCA has not paid this amount (hotel cost) even though the officials of our department have written many letters and spoke about this over the phone. Now the matter has come to my attention. I will try to resolve it amicably," Khandre said.

Eshwar Khandre PHOTO: PTI

- The cost of the three-day event last year was Rs 6.33 crore. Out of this, Rs 3 crore had been received and still Rs 3.33 crore is due from National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

This issue stems from Modi's visit to Mysuru for 50th anniversary celebrations of Bandipur Tiger Reserve. The total cost of the event was Rs 6 crore, but only Rs 3 crore has been released till date.

On 21 March, the hotel manager formally addressed a letter to the Forest Department officer, demanding the payment of Rs 80 lakh along with 18 per cent interest. The letter highlighted the urgency of the matter and indicated that failure to pay by 1 June deadline would result in legal proceedings. —*PTI/Salar News*

Mob attacks Davangere police stn over 'custodial' death, 2 suspended

DAVANGERE, 25 MAY

A police station was vandalised in Davangere's Channagiri and several vehicles were set on fire by a violent mob over an alleged custodial death, during the small hours of Saturday.

Adil, 30, was detained on 24 May for his alleged involvement in gambling activities, police said adding his health condition deteriorated and he died last night.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the Deputy Superintendent of Police and Channagiri police station inspector have been suspended following the attack.

He also said that it was not a custodial death.

As the news of the man's death spread, his relatives along with a large group of people went on a rampage, damaging police vehicles and hurling stones at the police station, alleging that he died in custody. Davangere Superintendent of Police Uma Prashanth said the body has been shifted to the government hospital and it will be handed over to the family members after postmortem.

PHOTO: X

Police are patrolling the area and additional forces have been deployed.

Action will be taken based on the postmortem report. The autopsy will be conducted in the presence of a Magistrate, she said. The police claimed that the accused died within six to seven minutes after being brought to the station.

"His parents are also aware of it and they have been convinced," Prashanth said.

Siddaramaia said the accused man has a history of epileptic seizures. "The accused should have been sent back after inquiry and he should not have been detained at the police station. Police are at fault, but it is not a lockup death. I have enquired it," he said. —*PTI*

DHARMASTHALA VISIT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar visit Shri Kshetra Dharmasthala, in Mangaluru, on Saurday. Temple administrator Veerendra Heggade attributed the rise in number of devotees to Shakthi scheme. CM said he felt blessed by women PHOTO: PTI

3 KALABURAGI DEVOTEES DIE IN AYODHYA ACCIDENT

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

Three devotees from Karnataka on their way to Ayodhya died in collision between lorry and a tempo travel they were travelling near the temple town. The deceased from Kalaburgi are Shivaraj, Kashinath, and Thangamma died on Friday night.

The vehicle was carrying 22 family members. The family members visited Kashi Vishwanath in Varanasi and were on the way to Ram Temple in Ayodhya. According to the District Hospital Emergency Medical Officer Ashish Pathak one of the injured is in critical condition and has been transferred to the Medical College in Darshan Nagar. —*Salar News*

CM says law is same for all on BJP MLA Poonja's arrest

MANGALURU, 25 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that the law is the same for everyone and wondered whether the allegations against BJP's Harish Poonja who is facing charges for allegedly intimidating police be denied just because he is an MLA, on Saturday.

Siddaramaiah said an FIR has been registered under section 353 (Assault or criminal force to deter a public servant from discharge of his duty) of the Indian Penal Code in connection with the case of alleged police intimidation by Poonja. Reacting to the Opposition's allegation that Congress is compelling the arrest of BJP MLA, Siddaramaiah said that the law is the same for everyone. Siddaramaiah said that two cases of threatening police have been registered against him. —*PTI*

India Global Innovation to be held on 6-7 June in City

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

In a testament to India's burgeoning prowess in innovation and entrepreneurship, the India Global Innovation Connect (IGIC) 2024 is set to convene in Bengaluru from 6 to 7 June, drawing over 500 participants from across the globe.

This annual summit, orchestrated by the Karnataka Digital Economy Mission in collaboration with the US-based strategic advisory firm Claude Smadja & Smadja, aims to spotlight India's emergence as a global innovator.

The summit serves as a convergence point for startup founders, venture capitalists, corporate leaders, technology experts, public policymakers, and government officials to foster technological innovation and forge strategic partnerships. —*ANI*

HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT

3-day elephant census in State concludes

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

The three-day elephant census in the inter-state border forest areas of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala that aimed at preventing human-elephant conflict concluded on Saturday. The final day focused on elephant counts near water bodies.

The census covered a vast area, including 113 beats across 13 ranges of Bandipur Tiger Reserve, 43 beats of Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, and 71 beats in MM Hills Life Sanctuary, Madikeri Wildlife and Virajpet forest divisions. More than 250 forest officials in each division were part of the census.

On the first day, the staff recorded elephant footprints, dung, and feeding signs covering approximately 15-20 kilometres in each beat confirming their presence. The findings were meticulously documented in census books.

The second day involved more direct observation efforts, where teams continued to traverse their designated beats and recorded any elephants they encountered. The combination of direct sightings and indirect signs as footprints provided a comprehensive understanding of the elephant population in the area. The final day focused on counting elephants that came to drink at lakes and other water bodies. Staff members stationed themselves at strategic locations near water sources to observe and record the elephants' behaviour and the count. This method ensured that elephants not encountered during the beat walks were also counted.

The final report provides an accurate estimate of the elephant population in the forest areas, contributing valuable information for wildlife management and conservation efforts.

The information helps in planning and implementing effective conservation strategies, ensuring the protection and preservation of elephants. The census primarily aims at addressing human-elephant conflict issues by identifying elephant movement patterns and habitats. —*Salar News*

- The census covered a vast area, including 113 beats across 13 ranges of Bandipur Tiger Reserve, 43 beats of Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, and 71 beats in MM Hills Life Sanctuary, Madikeri Wildlife

Last day focused on elephant counts near water bodies PHOTO: SALAR

OFFICIALS SEEKS NOD TO CAPTURE ROGUE ELEPHANT IN MADIKERI

MADIKERI, 25 MAY

Following the recent sighting of a rogue elephant, forest officials have sought government permission to capture the trouble-causing elephant and relocate it to another location for taming. The elephant was spotted in Badaga-Banangala coffee plantation in Virajpet taluk. The radio-collared elephant was earlier captured and was released back into the Antharasanthe forest in Mysuru district. The rogue elephant has been ransacking plantations hence posing a threat to human safety. Officials have submitted a proposal to government, seeking aprroval to capture the elephants. —*Salar News*

3 arrested for gang fight in Udupi after viral video

UDUPI, 25 MAY

Three people were arrested on Saturday for their alleged involvement in a clash between members of a gang here and lethal weapons were seized from them, police said.

According to police, there were four people each in two cars and they engaged in street fight at Kunjibettu in Udupi town police limits on 18 May night. They all belong to the 'Garuda Gang'.

The members tried to attack each other with weapons to 'settle' a real estate dispute, they said.

Police seized a car, two motorcycles, a sword, and a dagger from the accused.

After the video of the street fight went viral, the police swung into action and arrested three persons identified as Ashiq, Raquib, and Saqlain.

The police also confiscated knives and two cars.

"A First Information Report (FIR) has been registered at Udupi town police station in this regard. We are in hot pursuit of the other individuals involved in the incident who were found absconding," said Superintendent of police, Arun K.

The CCTV footage showed a white car reversing and ramming a grey vehicle before speeding away, while one of the occupants brandishing a sword is seen running behind it.

Taking to 'X', the Karnataka unit of the BJP on Saturday shared the purported video of the incident and slammed the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government for the alleged "deteriorating law and order situation" in the state and used hashtag #Congress Fails Karnataka.

"Karnataka model! Gang wars, rape of young women, assault, murder, bomb blasts, ganja, opium, rave parties, including Pakistani Zindabad slogans etc. @INCKarnataka are common under government rule. Anarchy is created today as a result of the government giving free hand to the terrorists, fanatics, thugs, miscreants @siddaramaiah and making police a puppet," the party alleged in a post in Kannada. —*PTI*

CCTV footage shows white car ramming the grey vehicle SCREENGRAB

DELHI

Brinda Karat says battery issue halted voting; senior citizens beat the heat

CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat on Saturday alleged she had to wait for almost an hour to cast her vote as the battery of the EVM control unit at her polling booth "drained out".

The Election Commission, however, said voting was halted only for 15 minutes and is now proceeding smoothly again.

Karat had gone to cast her vote at a polling booth set up at St Columba's School in the New Delhi constituency.

She said she had to wait for around 50 minutes before she could cast her ballot, expressing concerns over arrangements made by the Election Commission.

The Class 8 student was among the many volunteers from government schools deployed by the election authority at polling centres in the national capital to help voters. Kamal, one of the youngest in the lot, was stationed at a centre in Uttam Nagar in West Delhi constituency.

"They blessed me and thanked me", says 13-year-old Kamal who along with his seniors from school helped the elderly and physically challenged reach polling booths to cast their vote in Lok Sabha elections in Delhi.

Elderly voters in the national capital braved the scorching heat to cast their ballot, with some reaching polling centres after a one-kilometre walk and few others being brought to the booths on stretchers.

The specially designed pink and model booths were a hit among the voters, who not only cast their votes with ease but also enjoyed clicking selfies on the polling day.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi with her daughter Miraya Vadra and brother Rahul Gandhi arrives to cast her vote; Sonia Gandhi poses for a photograph after casting her vote PHOTO: PTI

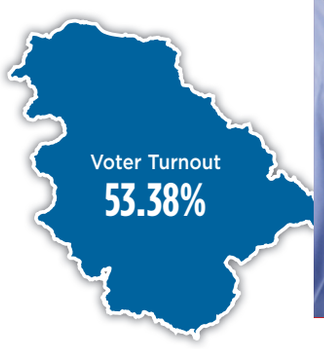
Cricket legend Kapil Dev along with his wife Romi Bhatia at a polling booth; Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, father Gobind Ram Kejriwal, wife Sunita Kejriwal and others show their fingers marked with ink after casting their votes; Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud with his wife Kalpana Das; Congress leader Pawan Khera; Yogendra Yadav PHOTO: PTI/X@CEOS

CURTAINS DOWN ON PHASE SIX

58 seats saw lowest turnout so far even as voters went to booths amid heat; EVM glitches and violence were plenty; Kashmiri Pandits' names missing

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Name not in voters' list, claim non-migrant Kashmiri Pandits



Many non-migrant Kashmiri Pandits expressed anguish on Saturday, claiming that their names were not in the voters' list, and termed it an "unfortunate" incident with a group that remained in the Kashmir region despite the turbulent militancy-period of the 1990s.

The matter pertained to a polling station set up at the Government Higher Secondary School in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha constituency.

No comment was immediately available from poll officials on the claims made by members of the small community that lives in a cluster in Anantnag district.

People said they have been born and brought up in Kashmir (Anantnag) and have their Aadhaar and election cards but still were "not allowed" to cast their votes at the polling station.

PDP leader Iltija Mufti Saturday alleged polling was being deliberately slowed down at a booth in the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha constituency, a charge denied by the administration.

PDP President and her mother Mehbooba Mufti is contesting the poll from the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency. Other PDP leaders also alleged voting was slowed down at other booths.

However, the administration denied the charges, saying voting was going on smoothly.

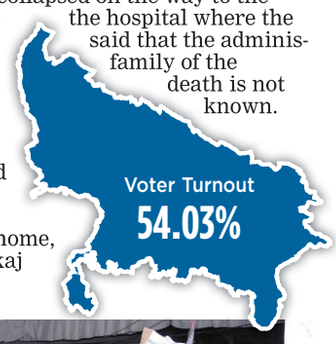
She said in a democratic country, everybody has the right to vote. "We are a citizens of this country".

UTTAR PRADESH

Newly-wed woman turns up to vote; another woman dies on the way to booth

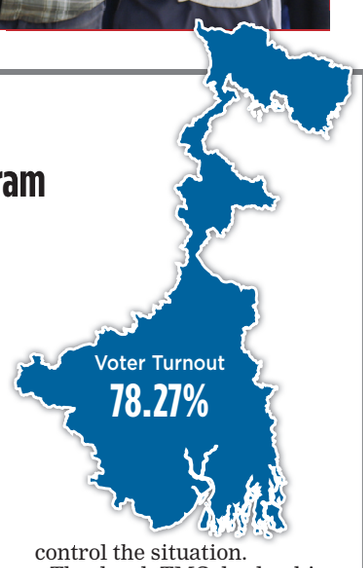
A woman died on her way to the polling centre in a village in Sant Kabir Nagar district. Additional SP Shashi Shekhar Singh said that the deceased was identified as Jandhari Devi,55, a resident of Manjhriya Pathan village. He said that Devi left home to cast her vote in the morning but collapsed on the way to the polling centre. She was rushed to the hospital where the doctor declared her dead. Singh said that the administration is in contact with the family of the deceased. The exact cause of death is not yet known.

Meanwhile, in Bhadohi district Malti Devi, 24, a resident of Rajaipur village, who got married on Friday night reached the polling booth in her bridal attire to vote before going to her in-laws home, District Information Officer Pankaj Kumar said.



WEST BENGAL

BJP candidate Pranat Tudu attacked in Jhargram



Senior BJP leader and Jhargram candidate Pranat Tudu was allegedly attacked by miscreants in Garbeta while visiting booth number 200 in Monglapota.

Several others were also injured in the incident. Tudu further alleged that TMC are frightened of impending defeat so they are trying to keep BJP supporters away from the booth.

He alleged that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was trying to create a Sandeshkhali-like situation in the entire Bengal.

Tudu is contesting against TMC candidate Kalipada Saren Kherwal and CPI (M) candidate Sonamani Tudu.

A large police contingent was rushed to the area to control the situation.

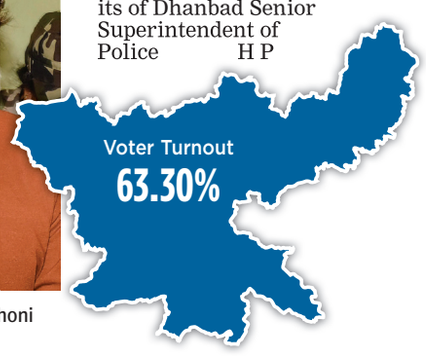
The local TMC leadership denied the allegations and accused Tudu of trying to "vitiate the peaceful polling process". "BJP nominee was threatening voters. The villagers got enraged and staged a protest," a local TMC leader said.

Vehicles belonging to various media houses were reportedly vandalised by the mob as well.

JHARKHAND

No poll boycott call by Maoists; Tundi casts vote freely

Cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni casts his vote in Ranchi



Fifty-five-year-old Devyanti Majhia was among many who on Saturday exercised their franchise freely in Maoist-hit Tundi block in Jharkhand's Dhanbad district as the red rebels did not give a poll boycott call for the first time since 1984, officials said.

Since 1984, Maoists have been putting up posters on school buildings and walls of houses asking people to refrain from casting their votes.

Voters' confidence to freely exercise their franchise was also boosted by frequent visits of Dhanbad Senior Superintendent of Police H P Janardhan and his team to vulnerable booths, the official claimed. The district administration declared 34 of the 85 booths in the block as Maoist-affected.

It was an nostalgic moment of Sweta Swansi, 33, as she arrived at the polling station, which was adorned with the theme of 'Jharkhand Women's Hockey', to cast her vote for Ranchi Lok Sabha seat.

The polling station, consisting of six booths at the CM School of Excellence in Bariatu, was adorned with banners and posters featuring hockey players, including state icons such as Olympian and Indian women's hockey team skipper Salima Tete, Olympian Nikki Pradhan, and Sangita Kumari.

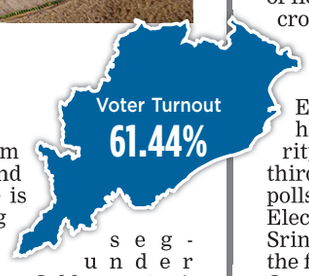
In a bid to increase polling percentage in urban booths of Ranchi, the district administration tied up with a bike-taxi aggregator, to provide free pick-and-drop facilities to urban voters, an official said on Saturday. Rapido Jharkhand Head, Jay Kumar Gaur, told PTI, "Around 800 motorbikes were put into service of the voters by the Rapido."

A 71-year-old man was trampled to death by a wild elephant in a village in Jharkhand's East Singhbhum district when he was on his way to cast his vote.

Approx voter turnout till 10 pm. **Source:** ECI

ODISHA

BJP candidate breaks EVM

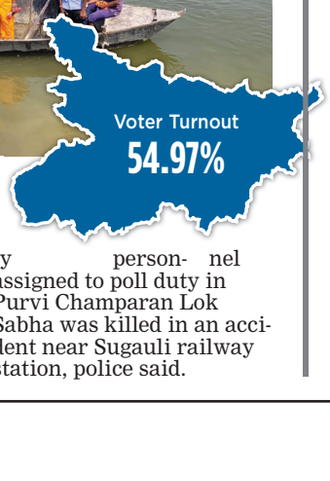


Sitting MLA and and BJP candidate from Khurda Prasant Jagdev broke an EVM and attacked a polling officer inside a booth. He is detained. A woman fell ill and died at a polling booth in Bhapur area of Nayagarh Assembly segment, while a polling agent died at a booth under Hindol Assembly segment of Dhenkanal Lok Sabha seat. A Non-Resident Indian (NRI) has travelled from Dubai to cast his vote in the Lok Sabha elections in Odisha. Priyadarshee Panigrahi, the son of former parliamentarian and Odisha minister Sriballav Panigrahi, has been staying in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates since 2008. He undertook a 20-hour journey from Dubai to Kolkata via flight and then by train to Jharsuguda and finally by road to Sambalpur to reach his polling station.

BIHAR

107 people detained in Patna for chaos at polling booths

In all, 107 people were arrested or detained for causing disruptions and attempting to hinder the voting process. Security forces seized Rs 2.86 crore in cash and 3.53 lakh litres of liquor worth Rs 9.46 crore from various locations within these eight Lok Sabha during the day. State Election Commission has made adequate security arrangements for the third phase of panchayat polls in Bihar. The Chief Electoral Officer HR Srinivasa said, adding that the figures are provisional. On security arrangements, he said adequate forces were deployed to check any untoward incidents. An air-ambulance was also kept ready to tackle emergencies during polls, he added. JS Gangwar,



Additional Director General (ADG) of Bihar Police (Headquarters), told reporters that approximately 61,800 security personnel and 20,800 home guards were stationed across the eight Lok Sabha seats. In a separate incident, a security personnel assigned to poll duty in Purvi Champaran Lok Sabha was killed in an accident near Sugauli railway station, police said.

HARYANA

Haryana sees peaceful polling

Enthusiasm was seen among first-time voters while elderly voters also reached polling booths to exercise their franchise. At a polling booth in Kurukshetra city, plants were given to voters who exercised their franchise. Arrangements had also been made for wheelchairs and shades for the assistance of voters aged 85 and above and persons with disability. There were 99 all-women-managed polling stations in the state. Besides these, 96 polling stations were operated by young officials and 71 by specially-abled people. Ex- Haryana chief minister Khattar and Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini were among the first to cast their votes at their respective booths. BJP sitting MP from Rohtak, Arvind Sharma said that there were no complaints about booth capturing though some werer trying hard but the administration is strict and alert.

PHOTO: PTI

Yechury says INDIA will win more than 300 seats

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Communist Party of India (Marxist) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury voted in the national capital in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha Elections on Saturday and later said that INDIA bloc will win around 300 seats. He said people of the country and "India that is Bharat" will win. Yechury told ANI that his appeal to voters is to "save the country, the democracy, the Constitution" and to work towards stopping "poisonous communal polarisation". He alleged that Prime Minister Modi is trying to heighten the communal polarisation through his speeches. Yechury said the Election Commission should take action "but that is not happening""It is certain that INDIA bloc will win more than 300 seats," he said answering a query. CPI-M is part of the INDIA bloc that has many other parties opposed to the BJP-led NDA.*—PTI*

Kangana will pack her bags after polls: Vikramaditya

SHIMLA, 25 MAY

Congress candidate from Himachal Pradesh's Mandi parliamentary constituency Vikramaditya Singh on Saturday took a dig at his BJP rival Kangana Ranaut and said "politics was not a part-time job" and that the actor would leave for Mumbai the day poll results are declared. Singh said he was seeking votes from people on his vision for development of Mandi, while the BJP candidate was raking up "irrelevant" issues for "entertainment". Addressing a series of public meetings in Mandi Lok Sabha segment, Singh said, "Politics is not a part-time job. One has to live among the people day and night and serve them." "Kangana would pack her bags and return to Mumbai on 4 June," he added.*—PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at public meeting for Lok Sabha polls, in Karakat, Bihar on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

INDIA doing mujra for Muslims: Modi

The remark drew criticism from Opposition

BUXAR/DEHRI/BIKRAM, 25 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday vowed to thwart alleged attempts to rob Dalits and backward classes of reservations by the INDIA bloc which he accused of "enslavement" and performing "mujra" for Muslim vote bank.

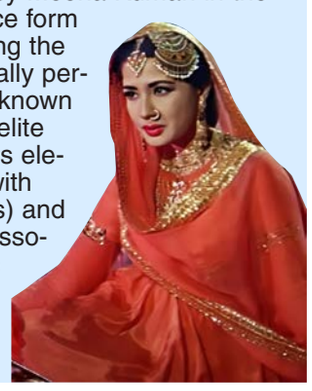
Addressing back-to-back rallies in Buxar, Karakat and Patliputra Lok Sabha constituencies in Bihar, the prime minister also charged the opposition coalition with indulging in "scaremongering", and claimed that he had been working "without fear" to wipe out terrorism and root out corruption.

"Bihar is the land which has given a new direction to the fight for social justice. I wish to declare on its soil that I will foil the plans of the INDIA bloc to rob SCs, STs and OBCs of their rights and divert these to Muslims. They may remain enslaved and perform 'mujra' to please their vote bank," Modi said.

Modi also alleged that the people of Bihar have been hurt by insulting remarks against migrants of the state from leaders of the Congress in Punjab and Telangana and the DMK and the TMC in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal respectively, and claimed, "These RJD people who keep doing 'mujra' with their lantern (poll symbol) do not have the courage to speak a word in protest."

What is 'mujra'?

Mujra, once made famous by Meena Kumari in the movie 'Pakeezah', is a dance form that originated in India during the Mughal era. It was traditionally performed by courtesans also known as tawaifs, to entertain the elite class and rulers. It combines elements of classical Kathak with local music (thumri, ghazals) and poetry. However, it is also associated with prostitution, due to some tawaifs becoming prostitutes during the British colonial period.



After machhli (fish), mutton and mangalsutra, it is now the turn of 'mujra'. Does it behove the prime minister of the country to speak such language? He has torn norms of civil discourse to shreds

-Manoj Kumar Jha, RJD leader

Opposition's reaction

NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) on Saturday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for accusing the INDIA bloc of performing "mujra" for its vote bank, and asked whether it behoved him to make such a statement.

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Saturday hit out PM Narendra Modi for his "mujra" remark to target the INDIA bloc, and said no Prime Minister has ever used such words for opposition leaders in the history of the country.

She said the entire country respects the post of prime minister and it his responsibility to maintain the dignity of the post.The prime minister has become nervous and has forgotten he is a representative of the country and of people, and such words should not have come out of his mouth, Vadra said here. *—PTI*

MGNREGA GONE FOR A TOSS?

Where are Namami Gange funds for Bihar: Cong to BJP

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Hitting out at BJP, Congress on Saturday asked where Patna's Smart City and Namami Gange funds disappeared and why Patna University has been denied central university status.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh posed several questions to Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of his rally in Pataliputra.

"Where have Patna's Smart City and Namami Gange funds disappeared? Will the Bihta airport ever be built? Why has BJP failed to prevent yet another paper leak? Why has Patna University been denied central university status?" Ramesh said in a post on X.

Congress also claimed that the crucial MGNREGA scheme falters whenever BJP is in power in Bihar and asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi why its implementation has been so poor in the state.

He said Patna witnessed large-scale waterlogging and flooding in 2019 and 2020 but funds received under the Smart City and the Namami Gange projects have still gone "grossly underutilised".

Six sewage treatment plants (STPs) and five new sewerage networks were sanctioned under these schemes but only four of the 11 projects have been completed, he said.

Jairam Ramesh PHOTO: PTI

"According to a CAG report on the six plants under Namami Gange project, 'None of the six STPs and their networks are completed in their entirety, even as the executing agency, Bihar Urban Infrastructure Development Corporation, was sanctioned almost the entire cost of the projects, amounting to Rs 3,288.69 crore'," Ramesh said.

"Why are so many essential projects lying incomplete in Buxar? Why have farmers in Chausa been protesting against the BJP for more than 500 days? Why has MGNREGA implementation been so poor in Bihar?" Ramesh said.

Congress general secretary said that in 2015, the "outgoing PM" had famously promised a Rs 1.25 lakh crore package for the people of Bihar. *—PTI*

CHINA BARGED IN OUR LAND BUT PM IS SILENT: KHARGE

SHIMLA, 25 MAY

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday alleged that China has encroached on India's land and is constructing houses and roads but Prime Minister Narendra Modi is silent.

Where is the 56-inch chest, Kharge asked, taking a dig at the prime minister in his address at a rally in Himachal Pradesh's Rohru.

The Congress chief said his party is fighting to save the people of the country and the Constitution. If the Constitution is not saved, democracy and the rights granted under it would be snatched, he said."The Modi government supports the rich, while the Congress is with the poor. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru built infrastructure which helped the poor," he said.

"We fought against Pakistan and got independence for Bangladesh. China encroached on our land and is constructing houses and roads and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is silent. Where is the 56-inch chest?"Kharge alleged the BJP misused federal probe agencies to intimidate and put pressure on opposition leaders. Citing the example of former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren, the Congress chief claimed that he was threatened by the BJP which asked him not to join the INDIA bloc and later jailed him when he refused. *—PTI*

INDEPENDENT MLA FROM HARYANA DIES

GURUGRAM/CHANDIGARH, 25 MAY

Independent MLA Rakesh Daulatabad from the Badshahpur assembly constituency died of a heart attack on Saturday morning, police said.The 45-year-old MLA suffered a heart attack in the morning and was taken to a private hospital, they said.

He died during treatment at Manipal Hospital in Palam Vihar here, they said.

Daulatabad had won the Badshahpur seat in the 2019 assembly elections as an independent candidate and later supported the BJP government. *—PTI*

Kejri slams Pak min; says won't tolerate interference

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday chastised former Pakistan minister Chaudhry Fawad Hussain after he called for the defeat of "forces of hate and extremism" in the Lok Sabha elections, saying the polls are India's internal matter and it will not tolerate interference by the "biggest sponsors of terrorism".

In the sixth of the seven-phase elections, 58 parliamentary constituencies, including seven in Delhi, went to polls on Saturday.

After casting his vote, Kejriwal, who is the AAP's national convenor, shared a picture on X of his family members showing fingers marked in ink and said he voted against "dictatorship, inflation and unemployment".

Sharing Kejriwal's post on X with the hashtags "MorePower" and "IndiaElection2024", Hussain said, "May peace and harmony defeat forces of hate and extremism."

Minutes after Hussain's post, Kejriwal hit back at him, saying his post was unnecessary.

"Chaudhry Sahib, the people of my country and I are fully capable of handling our issues. Your comment is not needed. The situation in Pakistan is very bad right now. You take care of your country," Kejriwal said on X. *—PTI*

Political heat on as mercury hits 50°C in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, 25 MAY

Heat conditions intensified in Rajasthan where mercury touched 50 degrees Celsius, the local weather office said on Saturday.Meanwhile, Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee President Govind Singh Dotasra targeted Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma saying that instead of finding a solution to water and power crisis in the state, he is busy campaigning for the Lok Sabha elections in other states. Dotasra said the BJP government in the state is not able to provide electricity and drinking water to people and, therefore, even in this scorching heat, so many people in the rural areas walk miles to get drinking water."*—PTI*

Will start J&K assembly elections soon: CEC Kumar

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Encouraged by the voter turnout in Jammu and Kashmir in the Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission will "very soon" initiate the process of holding assembly polls in the Union Territory, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said on Saturday.

Responding to a question on the turnout in various seats of Jammu and Kashmir and if assembly elections could be held soon, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Kumar said the poll panel is very encouraged by people's participation in the parliamentary polls.

"It's music to (my) ears. People -- youth, women -- are happily turning out in large numbers (to vote).

The roots of democracy are being further strengthened, people are participating," he said.

"They deserve their government. We will initiate that process very soon ... very encouraged to do this," CEC added.

While announcing the schedule for Lok Sabha elections in March, Kumar said holding assembly and parliamentary elections simultaneously was not practical due to logistical and security reasons. *—PTI*

'Will review quotas for Muslims under OBC in R'than'

JAIPUR, 25 MAY

Amid a tug of war over reservations between the BJP and opposition parties in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, a Rajasthan minister on Saturday said the classification of certain Muslim groups under the OBC category would be reviewed in the state.

Social justice and empowerment minister of Rajasthan Avinash Gehlot said that previous Congress governments gave OBC reservation to Muslim castes from 1997 to 2013 as part of appeasement politics and now it will be reviewed.

"Baba Saheb Ambedkar had written in the Constitution that reservation benefits cannot be given to any caste or class on the basis of religion, but from 1997 to 2013, Congress included Muslim castes in the OBC category," Gehlot was qiuoted as saying in a video.

Rajasthan minister Avinash Gehlot PHOTO: FACEBOOK

"The 14 castes of Muslims have been included in the OBC category. We have complaints and the department is getting the verification done," he said, adding that a high-level committee will be formed on the matter.When contacted, the minister said that giving reservation "on the basis of religion is unconstitutional" and should be reviewed.

Reacting to it, PCC chief Govind Singh Dotasra said that the BJP was doing 'Hindu-Muslim' politics out of fear of its defeat in the Lok Sabha elections instead of giving an account of the work done by the central government.

"Regardless of your Hindu-Muslim politics, done out of fear of defeat, INDIA alliance will form the government. The people are demanding an account of the last 10 years. It is demanding answers on inflation, unemployment and bad governance," he said.

- Social justice and empowerment minister of Rajasthan Avinash Gehlot said that previous Congress governments gave OBC reservation to Muslim castes from 1997 to 2013 as part of appeasement politics and now it will be reviewed

AIMIM's state general secretary Kashif Zuberi said it will protest against the review. He said that the BJP should review its election manifesto instead of taking decisions to target one religion. *—PTI*

Modi and BJP will change Constitution: RaGa

AMRITSAR, 25 MAY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday lashed out at the BJP, alleging that it will change the Constitution if it wins the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Addressing his first poll rally in Punjab in support of Amritsar candidate Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Gandhi said these elections are not ordinary. "In this election, Narendra Modi ji and BJP senior leaders are attacking the Constitution. For the first time in the history of independent India, their party leaders have openly said they will change, scrap, finish and throw the Constitution if they win the election," the former Congress president said. He said the elections are a battle between two ideologies." Modi ji and BJP who want to finish it (Constitution) and Congress which is protecting it," said Gandhi.*—PTI*

'FALSE NARRATIVES CREATED'

EC releases seat-wise voter turnout

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Election Commission on Saturday came out with Lok Sabha constituency-wise data on the number of votes cast in the first five phases of the elections and asserted that there is a pattern in creating false narratives and mischievous design to vitiate the electoral process.

It said that any alteration in the number of votes polled is not possible.

The poll panel came out with the absolute number of voters on its own a day after Supreme Court refused to issue directions to it on an NGO's plea for uploading polling booth-wise voter turnout data on its website.

EC said it has decided to further expand the format of turnout data to include the absolute number of voters in every parliamentary constituency.

The absolute numbers are discernable parliamentary constituency-wise by all citizens by applying the turnout percentage to total electors, both already made available in the public domain, the poll panel said.Electors are those who are part of the electoral roll and eligible to voters. Voters are those who actually cast their vote in an election. While EC had been issuing turnout percentage, there had been demands to make the actual number of voters in every phase public.

People wait to cast their votes during the 6th phase of Lok Sabha elections, in Bankura on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

No delay in release of voter turnout data: EC

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Electors are those on the electoral roll and eligible to vote. Voters are those who actually cast their votes in an election. While the EC had been issuing the turnout percentage, there were demands to make the actual number of voters in every phase public.

"The voter turnout data was always available on the app. The commission underlines that there has been no delay in the release of the voter turnout data," the EC said.

In an affidavit filed before Supreme Court earlier this week, the commission expressed concern that there is a "design, a pattern" that is at play and the petitioners are not approaching courts with clean hands. *—PTI*

UDF wants ministers to quit over liquor policy

PALAKKAD, 25 MAY

The opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) on Saturday stepped up its attack against the Left government in the state over its liquor policy and demanded the resignation of Excise and Tourism ministers over alleged corruption in this regard.

The Congress-led front said a crime branch probe would not bring out the real truth behind the alleged graft to the tune of several crores in connection with the liquor policy and therefore a judicial probe should be carried out.

The demand came a day after reports of the state government mulling scrapping the 'dry day' norm (not selling alcohol in the state on the first day of every calendar month) with respect to alcohol sales had kicked off a political storm in the state.

While the UDF has accused the LDF dispensation of taking bribes to 'favour' bar owners, the Left claimed that it has not yet held any deliberations over its liquor policy.

MM Hassan PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Addressing mediapersons here, UDF Convenor MM Hassan said the reported crime branch probe, based on the complaint of Excise Minister MB Rajesh, would not bring out the "real truth".

He alleged that Rajesh directly lodged a complaint with the police with an intension to protect Tourism Minister PA Mohammed Riyas, who had influenced and pressurised for the changes in the liquor policy.

He further alleged that it was Riyas who had demanded to scrap the "dry day" norm and the CM was also aware about it. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

India-funded schools opened in Nepal

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Two schools in Nepal, constructed with Indian government's financial assistance under 'Nepal-India Development Cooperation', were inaugurated in the presence of government officials, embassy officials, and political representatives. Shree Bal Janata Secondary School at Lamahi Municipality, Dang, was built under the Indian government's financial aid at the cost of NRs.17.60 million, according to the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu. The inauguration was done jointly by Ratna Bahadur Khatri, Social Development Minister of Lumbini Province, Nityananda Sharma, Chief of District Coordination Committee, Jogaraj Chaudhary, Mayor, Lamahi Municipality and Avinash Kumar Singh, First Secretary, Embassy of India, Kathmandu. *—ANI*

Judge loses ₹50K to fraudster posing as his colleague

MUMBAI, 25 MAY

A district judge from Maharashtra's Solapur was allegedly duped of Rs 50,000 by an unidentified person who used the photo of a judge from the Bombay High Court as a WhatsApp display picture (DP) to ask for the money, police said on Saturday. The Mumbai police on Friday registered a first information report (FIR) under relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code and IT Act based on a complaint lodged by the high court's registrar, an official said. The district judge received a WhatsApp message on Friday from a phone number with the photograph of a high court judge as the DP, he said. Without verifying anything further, the district judge transferred the sum but got suspicious when he got another message with more demands, he said. *—PTI*

Mumbai announces water cut from 30 May amid crisis

MUMBAI, 25 MAY

With only 10 per cent of usable water stock available in reservoirs supplying water to the city, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Saturday announced a 5 per cent water cut from 30 May. The civic body said it would impose a 10 per cent water cut from 5 June as a precaution to ensure the water stock will last for as long as possible. The cuts will also include water supplied to the Thane Municipal Corporation and Bhiwandi Nizampura Municipal Corporations, it said. "As of May 25, 1,40,202 million litres of water is available in dams supplying water to Mumbai, and this is only 9.69 per cent of the per annum requirement of 14,47,363 million litres," it said. *—PTI*

MP man hacks wife and daughter to death, kills himself

DAMOH, 25 MAY

A 35-year-old man hacked his wife and infant daughter to death before dying by suicide in Madhya Pradesh's Damoh district, police said on Saturday. The incident took place at Roda Patna village under Hindoria police station limits on Friday afternoon, an official said. Hindoria police station in-charge Amit Gautam said Manoj Patel killed his wife Sonam Patel, 25, and their six-month-old daughter with an axe. Patel later hanged himself in the same room, he said. The couple's two other daughters, aged two and four, were playing outside at the time, while their family members were in other rooms, Gautam said. The police official said Patel was mentally disturbed and was undergoing treatment. Further investigation is underway, he said. *—PTI*

NASA to train Indians for Int'l Space Station this year

India, US to collab on joint Earth-observing mission NISAR

WASHINGTON, 25 MAY

NASA will soon provide advanced training to Indian astronauts to send a joint mission to the International Space Station this year or shortly thereafter, US envoy to India Eric Garcetti has said.

Garcetti made these remarks while speaking at the "US-India Commercial Space Conference: Unlocking Opportunities for US & Indian Space Startups," hosted by the US-India Business Council (USIBC) and the US Commercial Service (USCS) in Bengaluru on Friday.

"We will launch the NISAR satellite from the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Satish Dhawan Space Center to monitor all resources, including ecosystems, the Earth's surface, natural hazards, sea level rise, and the cryosphere," Garcetti said, according to a USIBC press statement issued here.

US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti with ISRO Chairman S Somanath in Bengaluru on Saturday *PHOTO: X/ USAMBASSADORERICGARCETTI*

NISAR is a joint Earth-observing mission between NASA and ISRO. The Artemis Accords lay out a framework for collaborating nations' safe exploration of the moon and beyond. The day-long event in Bengaluru saw the participation from senior officials from both the US and Indian governments, including Garcetti, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman Dr S Somanath, representatives from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Government of India, as well as prominent leaders from the commercial space industry, industry stakeholders, venture capitalists, and market analysts. Garcetti has proposed to develop a "QUAD satellite" involving the partnership of India and the US. He visited headquarters and met with Chairman S Somanath and discussed the ongoing cooperation between India and the US in the field of space.

Meanhwhile, he met and cheered India's Blind Cricket Team as they prepare to promote blind cricket in the US during the T20 Cricket World Cup. Garcetti shared pictures with the team at the Chinnaswamy Stadium here and in one of the pictures, he was also seen batting. *—PTI*

Grandad of Pune teen who ran over 2 arrested

PUNE, 25 MAY

The Pune Police Crime Branch unit on Saturday morning arrested the grandfather of the minor accused of killing two motocycle-borne people in Pune earlier this week after ramming into them the luxury car he was allegedly driving.

The commissioner of Pune city police, Amitesh Kumar said that the grandfather of the accused was arrested.

The Pune City Police had on Thursday questioned the 17-year-old's grandfather in connection with the incident that took place early on Sunday morning in Pune's Kayani Nagar. The accused teenager was reportedly driving a luxury car in an inebriated condition and hit two motorcycle borne IT professionals identified as Aneesh Awadhiya and Ashwini Koshta.

Along with the grandfather of the accused- Surendra Kumar Agarwal, his son Vishal The driver Gangadhar had lodged a complaint with police alleging that he was taken to Surendra Agarwal's home against his will on the night of May 19 when Gangadhar was leaving from from the Yerawada Police Station.

Surendra and his son Vishal allegedly threatened Gangadhar, snatched his phone and forcibly kept him confined in their bungalow in an attempt to force him to take responsibility for the crime instead of his minor grandson.

The accused has been detained at an observation home on the order of the Juvenile Justice Board. He was earlier granted bail in the case but later sent to the observation home for 14 days till 5 June. The accused teenager's father, who was arrested earlier, is lodged in Yerawada Central Prison after he was granted judicial custody for 14 days. The Pune district administration is mulling the idea of webcasting of entry and exit points of pubs and bars in the city to ensure better compliance with rules and regulations. *—ANI*

Fire that broke out due to a boiler blast in a chemicals factory, at Dombivli, in Thane killed 10 *PHOTO: PTI*

Everything was over in five seconds, says Dombivli factory worker

THANE, 25 MAY

It was 'pralay' for five seconds and everything was over. That's how Avdesh Kumar summed up the Thane factory blast that snuffed out nine lives.

Kumar was a worker at the chemical factory where a blast on Thursday also injured over 60.

"It took only five seconds and everything was finished like 'pralay' (cataclysm)," said Kumar, recalling the chaos and panic as metal pieces and debris flew in all directions.

"The sky was filled with flying metal pieces and glasses. It was total havoc," said the worker, describing the devastation after a boiler exploded on Thursday at Amudan Chemicals in Dombivli MIDC area of Maharashtra's Thane district.

The factory worker said he was hit by a "flying 5-kg angle" in the back, causing profuse bleeding and excruciating pain.

Amid the pandemonium, Kumar said he sought help from those around him but everyone was in a frenzied scramble for safety.

"Everyone was running helter-skelter, trying to save their lives," he recounted.

The powerful blast triggered widespread destruction at the factory. "Everything was damaged, with the roof and structure collapsing. Nothing is left now," he said.

The impact of the blast and the resultant blaze also caused damage to adjacent factories and houses, according to officials.

Also, a court in Maharashtra's Thane district on Saturday remanded in police custody till 29 May the owner of the chemical factory in Dombivli where an explosion killed nine persons and injured more than 60. *—PTI*

CLIMATE CHANGE

Rains damage houses, submerge roads in Kerala

T'PURAM, 25 MAY

The ongoing spell of heavy rains in Kerala has affected normal life, with scores of houses suffering damage, roads being submerged, trees uprooted, flood water entering houses and trains running late as a result of the steady downpour that continued to lash the state on Saturday.

Flood water entered houses, schools and shops located in low-lying areas of Kuttanad in coastal Alappuzha district.Potholes appeared on roads, posing a threat to vehicle users in many places there.

Meanwhile, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) today forecast heavy rainfall at one or two places in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, and Kottayam districts.

At Kaikulangara in Kollam district, a family of four had a narrow escape as the tiled roof of their house collapsed due to heavy showers.

Residents of the house escaped with minor injuries and were taken to a nearby hospital, police said.

Another house in Kannettumukku here was completely damaged following downpour in the small hours today, they said.

However, the elderly woman living in it said she had a miraculous escape as she ran out to the courtyard hearing a sound in the night.

Many roads were battered and houses damaged in the coastal village of Pozhiyur, which witnessed intense sea incursion on Friday evening.

Flood water entered houses, schools and shops located in low-lying areas of Kuttanad in coastal Alappuzha district *PHOTO: PTI*

Relief camps were set up in the area and fishermen have been advised not to venture into the sea due to the continuing inclement weather. Water-logging disrupted normal life in towns and villages alike. *—PTI*

Severe cyclone Remal to make landfall in Bengal today

Agartala, 25 May

India Meteorological Department (IMD) in Agartala has issued a severe cyclone warning for the north-eastern region of India and coastal areas of Bangladesh. Cyclone Remal is expected to make landfall in Bengal on Sunday. It is projected to occur in West Bengal and the coastal regions of Bangladesh around midnight. *—ANI*

Assam school timings revised amid heatwave

GUWAHATI, 25 MAY

Amid the soaring temperatures, the Office of the District Elementary Education has ordered the government and private schools in Kamrup Metro District to reschedule their timings effective from 27 May.

According to a release from the Office of the District Elementary Education, the new school timings are as follows - the timings for lower primary (LP) schools will be 7.30 am to 12 pm, for middle English (ME) schools, it will be 7.30 am to 12.30 pm and for higher secondary schools it will be 7.30 am to 1 pm.

These changes were implemented by the District Office of Elementary Education following orders from the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup district. These instructions were introduced due to the continuous rise in levels of mercury.

The release also outlined additional instructions to ensure students' well-being during the heatwave, such as conducting morning assembly in classes or shaded areas, allowing students to wear sandals instead of shoes and preventing students from wearing blazers. *—ANI*

Woman sells baby due to poverty, reunited

AGARTALA, 25 MAY

A tribal woman from Tripura's Dhalai district, grappling with dire poverty following her husband's death five months ago, sold her newborn for Rs 5,000, an official said on Saturday.

The four-day-old girl was fortunately rescued from a couple in Hezamara, West Tripura district, and reunited with her mother, following Opposition leader Jitendra Choudhury's intervention, sources said.

Mormati Tripura, 39, of Taraban Colony gave birth to a daughter at home on Wednesday. The next day she sold the child to a couple in Hezamara for Rs 5,000, citing extreme poverty after her husband's demise five months ago, sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) Arindam Das said.

PHOTO: PTI

Assuring ongoing support to the family, Das said necessary aid had been extended to the mother and child at their residence.

In response to the distressing revelation, Choudhury had shared a video where the woman confessed to selling her newborn due to extreme poverty, prompting Chief Secretary JK Singh to take immediate action on Friday.

Choudhury alleged that Mormati's husband Purnajoy, who sustained the family by selling firewood, passed away due to lack of proper medical care amidst dire financial circumstances. *—PTI*

B'desh in touch with India, US, Nepal over MP's murder

KOLKATA, 25 MAY

Bangladesh Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan claimed that businessman Akhtaruzzaman Shahin is the key suspect in the murder of parliamentarian Anwarul Azim Anar and his ministry was working with India and the US to get and put him on trial for the alleged crime.

Khan said, "Of course, we are looking for Akhtaruzzaman Shahin. He is a key suspect and wanted.

We have sought help from Indian, Nepal and US law enforcement agencies to put him on trial."

"We are working on a system to bring Shahin back...We are in touch with all the agencies concerned including the Interpol to ensure justice to our parliamentarian's family. We have already arrested three persons including a woman. Two of them have criminal backgrounds and we are checking the antecedents of the woman," he said.

Asked about the motive behind the murder, the Home Minister said, "We will reveal it soon." *—PTI*

Kerala HC: Cut roadside trees only if dangerous

KOCHI, 25 MAY

The Kerala High Court has directed the state government to ensure no trees on roadsides are felled merely because they obstruct commercial activities.

The High Court said that trees can be cut and removed only if they are in damaged condition and as a result pose a danger to public safety.

A decision regarding that should be taken by a committee constituted in accordance with a 2010 government order regulating the felling and disposal of trees growing on government lands, Justice PV Kunhikrishnan said.

"Without such a decision, no trees on the roadside of the State shall be cut and removed by any authorities. The Chief Secretary of the State shall issue necessary orders to that effect.

"...the State of Kerala should see that no request to cut and remove trees on the roadsides of the State can be permitted without sufficient reasons. Trees give cool shades, pure oxygen and shelter to birds and animals," the court said in its order of 22 May. *—PTI*

IN KERALA

Tourists follow Google map, drive car into stream

KOTTAYAM, 25 MAY

Using Google maps to navigate resulted in a tourist group from Hyderabad driving into a stream swollen with water near Kuruppanthara in this south Kerala district, police said on Saturday.

The incident occurred late Friday night when the four-member group, including a woman, were going towards Alappuzha.

The road they were travelling on was covered by water overflowing from the stream due to heavy rains and since the tourists were unfamiliar with the area, they drove right into the water body while navigating using Google maps, police said.

All four managed to escape unharmed due to the efforts of a nearby police patrolling unit and local residents, but their vehicle was completely submerged under the water, an officer of Kaduthuruthy police station said.

The vehicle -- a Ford Endeavour -- was later pulled out of the stream using a crane.

Thereafter, the man who was driving the vehicle told reporters that he and his friends were going to Alappuzha from Munnar and they took the route shown by Google maps.

"At around 2-3 pm, it started raining very heavily. The road was waterlogged. I was going very slow at around 10 kms per hour. But, suddenly the front tyres went deep into the water and the vehicle lost control.

The car was completely submerged in the stream in Kuruppanthara area, however, no one was injured *PHOTO: X@ SHIBIMOL KG*

"Then the rear tyres also went in and the vehicle started floating forward. We quickly pulled down the windows and jumped out. We somehow managed to safely reach the shore," he said.

Meanwhile, residents of the area said such accidents happen there during the rainy season when the road gets submerged.

This is not the first such Google map-related accident reported in Kerala.

In October last year, two young doctors died in a car accident which occurred after they allegedly followed directions on Google Maps and fell into a river. *—PTI*

SIA passengers rocked by severe turbulence on 21 May

SINGAPORE, 25 MAY

The Singapore Airlines (SIA) Flight SQ321 that was rocked by severe turbulence on Tuesday climbed and descended rapidly twice in 62 seconds, stunning the passengers with one dying of heart attack, as the aircraft flew over the Irrawaddy Delta region of Myanmar, it emerged on Saturday. It is the first SIA aviation accident involving a fatality since the SQ006 crash in Taiwan in October 2000. As the flightexperienced sudden severe turbulence over the Irrawaddy Basin during the breakfast service, the pilot declared a medical emergency and diverted the plane carrying 211 passengers and 18 crew members to Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport, where the plane made an emergency landing at 3.45 pm (4.45 pm Singapore time). *—PTI*

Sindhi journalist Nasrullah Gadani shot dead

LONDON, 25 MAY

The World Sindhi Congress (WSC) has expressed sorrow and outrage over the murder of a Sindhi journalist, Nasrullah Gadani, bringing the total number of media workers reported killed nationwide in 2024 to five, according to Voice of America (VOA). Gadani, who was attacked and shot three days ago in Ghotki, Sindh, succumbed to his injuries in a hospital in Karachi today. Nasrullah Gadani was respected for his commitment to truth and justice. Despite enduring a life of poverty, he refused to be co-opted by the system, choosing instead to highlight the injustices faced by the Sindhi people. Gadani's courageous reporting often targeted the abuses of power by feudal and politicians, who, under the protection of the Pakistan army, have perpetuated widespread suffering in Sindh. *—ANI*

Pakistan PM Sharif to visit China for CPEC launch

ISLAMABAD, 25 MAY

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will visit China in the first week of next month to join the formal launching of the second phase of the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, according to a media report on Saturday. A source in the Prime Minister's Office told the Dawn newspaper that Prime Minister Sharif was scheduled to leave for China on 4 June, but the date of the visit could slightly be changed. The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is opposed by India as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Infrastructure and energy projects were part of the CPEC's first phase. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@EVERESTTODAY

Nepali woman climbs Everest 3 times in 2 weeks; sets record

KATHMANDU, 25 MAY

Purnima Shrestha, a Nepalese mountaineer and photojournalist, on Saturday scripted history by becoming the first person to summit Mt Everest, the highest peak in the world, three times in a single climbing season. Purnima first summited the 8848.86-metre peak on 12 May. She reached the summit again on May 19 with Pasang Sherpa and achieved her third summit on Saturday at 5.50am, said Pemba Sherpa, expedition director at Eight K Expeditions which organised the expedition. This was Purnima's fourth ascent to Everest. She climbed Everest for the first time in 2018. Purnima visited the Everest Base Camp in 2017 to cover the Everest marathon. She said this event attracted her to climb the mountains. She then climbed Mt. Manaslu in the same year. *—PTI*

45,000 Rohingyas fled fighting in Myanmar

UN rights office spokeswoman said thousands of civilians have been displaced in recent days

RAKHINE, 25 MAY

Escalating violence in conflict-torn Myanmar's Rakhine State has forced another 45,000 minority Rohingya to flee, the United Nations warned, amid allegations of beheadings, killings and burnings of property.

Clashes have rocked Rakhine State since the Arakan Army (AA) rebels attacked forces of the ruling military government in November, ending a ceasefire that had largely held since a military coup in 2021. The fighting has caught in the middle the Muslim minority group, long considered outsiders by the majority Buddhist residents, either from the government or the rebel side.

The AA says it is fighting for more autonomy for the ethnic Rakhine population in the state, which is also home to an estimated 6,00,000 members of the persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority, who have chosen to remain in the country.

More than a million Rohingya have taken shelter in neighbouring Bangladesh after fleeing Rakhine, including hundreds of thousands in 2017 during an earlier crackdown by the military that is now the subject of a United Nations genocide court case.

UN rights office spokeswoman Elizabeth Throssell told reporters in Geneva on Friday that tens of thousands of civilians have been displaced in recent days by the fighting in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships.

UN rights chief Volker Turk was urging Bangladesh and other countries "to provide effective protection to those seeking it, in line with international law, and to ensure international solidarity with Bangladesh in hosting Rohingya refugees in Myanmar", she said. But reporter from Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, said that with more than a million Rohingya already in the country, the government has been reluctant to take more, leaving the latest refugees stuck on the Myanmar side of the border.

More than a million Rohingya have already fled Rakhine State, including hundreds of thousands in 2017 **PHOTO: AFP**

- More than a million Rohingya have taken shelter in neighbouring Bangladesh after fleeing Rakhine

'BEHEADINGS'

James Rodehaver, head of the rights office's Myanmar team, described the horrifying situation many were fleeing from.

He said his team had received testimonies and seen satellite images, online videos and pictures indicating that Buthidaung town had been "largely burned". "We have received information indicating that the burning did start on May 17 ... two days after the military had retreated from the town ... and the Arakan Army claimed to have taken full control of the village."

One survivor had described seeing dozens of dead bodies as he fled Buthidaung, while another had said he was among tens of thousands who fled the town only to find themselves blocked by the Arakan Army on the road west towards Maungdaw town. *—Al Jazeera*

So far only four bodies have been pulled from the debris **PHOTO: PTI**

300 buried in Papua New Guinea landslide: Rescue operation on

PORT MORESBY, 25 MAY

Rescue teams have arrived at the site of an enormous landslide in Papua New Guinea's remote highlands, helping villagers search for hundreds of people feared dead under towering mounds of rubble and mud.

"At this time, we are still searching for bodies who are buried by the massive landslide," community leader Mark Ipuia told Reuters news agency on Saturday., adding that "more than 300" villagers may be entombed.

So far, only four bodies have been pulled from the debris, a United Nations official based in the capital, Port Moresby, was quoted as saying.

The disaster hit Kaokalam village in Enga province early on Friday morning when many villagers were at home asleep, according to government officials. According to Papua New Guinea media, at least 1,182 houses were also buried in the landslide in the area located about 600km northwest of Port Moresby.

"There are a lot of houses under the debris that cannot be reached," said UN official Serhan Aktoprak, who estimated as many as 3,000 people called the hillside settlement home. "The land continues to slide and move, and that makes it dangerous for people to operate," he told AFP news agency.

While the area is not densely populated, humanitarian agency CARE said that it is worried that the death toll could be disproportionately high. The landslide has also blocked highway access, making helicopters the only way to reach the area. The emergency team of medics, including military and police, also faced difficulty in reaching the area due to rugged terrain and damage to major roads.

In all, more than six villages had been affected by the landslide in the province's Mulitaka region, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) said on Saturday. Prime Minister James Marape has said disaster officials, the Defence Force and the Department of Works and Highways were assisting with relief and recovery efforts. *—Al Jazeera*

'POSSIBILITY OF WAR'

Taiwan detects 62 Chinese military aircraft, 27 vessels

TAIPEI, 25 MAY

Taiwan Ministry of Defence, on Saturday, detected a significant Chinese military presence around the nation, with military aircraft and vessels operating around Taiwan.

According to the ministry, 62 China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft, and 27 China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessels were seen operating in the vicinity of Taiwan.

Out of these, 47 of the aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered Taiwan's southwest, southeast and eastern Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ).

In response, Taiwan's armed forces monitored the situation and responded accordingly. "47 of the aircraft crossed the median line of #Taiwan Strait and entered Taiwan's SW, SE, and eastern ADIZ. #ROCArmedForces have monitored the situation and responded accordingly," Taiwan Ministry of Defence said in a posted-on X.

Meanwhile, the US State Department said it was "monitoring very closely" in coordination with Taiwan after Beijing launched two days of military exercises in the Taiwan Strait and surrounding areas, Central News Agency Taiwan (CNA) reported. In an email response to CNA, a State Department spokesperson expressed concern over reports of the People Liberation Army's (PLA) joint military exercises in the Taiwan Strait and around Taiwan. The spokesperson noted that China's actions risk escalation and undermine long-standing norms that have maintained regional peace and stability for decades.

47 of the aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait **PHOTO: ANI**

The spokesperson emphasized that Taiwan's political transition is a normal part of its democratic process and that China should not use it as a pretext for provocative or coercive measures. The spokesperson added that the US is confident in its current force posture and operations in the region to ensure peace and stability and to meet its national security commitments.

On Friday, on the second day of China's military games on the Taiwan strait, the island nation's Ministry of National Defence (MND) reported a significant presence of Chinese military aircraft and vessels near its territory.

Asserting Taiwan's capacity and confidence to ensure its security and defend its sovereignty, the MND also called upon the international community to condemn China's actions, which it deemed irrational.

'TRUMP'S PUBLIC STATEMENT MAY COMPROMISE CASE'

WASHINGTON, 25 MAY

Federal prosecutors have asked the judge overseeing the classified documents case against Donald Trump to bar the former president from public statements that "pose a significant, imminent, and foreseeable danger to law enforcement agents" participating in the prosecution.

The request made to US District Judge Aileen Cannon on Friday follows a false claim by Trump earlier this week that the FBI agents who searched his home in August 2022 were "authorised to shoot me" and were "locked & loaded ready to take me out & put my family in danger".

He was referring to the disclosure in a court document that was made public that the FBI, during the search, followed a standard use-of-force policy that prohibits the use of deadly force except when the officer conducting the search has a reasonable belief that the "subject of such force poses an imminent danger of death or serious physical injury to the officer or to another person".

The policy is routine and meant to limit the use of force during searches. Prosecutors noted that the search was intentionally conducted when Trump and his family were away and was coordinated with the Secret Service. No force was used. *—PTI*

US announces aid worth USD 275M for Ukraine

WASHINGTON, 25 MAY

The United States on Friday announced new security assistance worth USD 275 million for Ukraine, including ammunitions, artillery rounds, and precision aerial munitions. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reiterated US support for Ukraine amid its ongoing war with Russia.

Blinken said that the new security assistance of Ukraine is part of the US efforts to help Kyiv repel Moscow's assault near Kharkiv.

In a post on X, Blinken stated, "Today, the United States is announcing a USD 275 million drawdown of weapons and equipment to support the brave people of Ukraine. We will continue to stand with Ukraine in its fight against Russia's aggression." *—ANI*

Sunak takes time amid mass exodus of MPs

LONDON, 25 MAY

After declaring a general election for 4 July, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is reportedly spending his first Saturday with his closest advisers as he takes an "unusual step" of a day away from public events over the first weekend of the campaign.

The 44-year-old Indian-origin leader is taking some private time out with his aides and family amid a mass exodus of senior members of Parliament from his embattled Conservative Party.

Cabinet ministers Michael Gove and Andrea Leadsom became the latest Tory frontliners to announce their decision to not stand for re-election in this summer's polls, taking the number of party members quitting the race to as many as 78.

Gove's announcement in a letter released on social media on Friday evening had been anticipated amid strong challenges to incumbent Tories in constituencies around the country.

Cabinet ministers Michael Gove and Andrea Leadsom became the latest Tory frontliners **PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.CO.UK**

Leadsom released her own letter shortly after, writing to Sunak: "After careful reflection, I have decided not to stand as a candidate in the forthcoming election."

In his letter, Housing Minister Gove wrote that he knew "the toll office can take, as do those closest to me...No one in politics is a conscript. We are volunteers who willingly choose our fate."

Former prime minister Theresa May is also among the senior MPs stepping away, with former defence minister Ben Wallace already having announced his decision to leave frontline politics.

—PTI

UN advice to Israel isolates US position

The Biden administration also insists that the steps its close ally Israel has taken so far have not crossed red lines **PHOTO: X/@ALORENZO33**

WASHINGTON, 25 MAY

A ruling by the top United Nations court ordering Israel to halt its military offensive in the southern Gaza city of Rafah has deepened its disconnect with the United States over an operation that faces mounting international condemnation but that American officials describe, at least for now, as limited and targeted.

The decision on Friday by the International Court of Justice in The Hague adds to the pressure facing an increasingly isolated Israel, coming just days after Norway, Ireland and Spain said they would recognise a Palestinian state, and the chief prosecutor of a separate international court sought arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The Biden administration also insists that the steps its close ally Israel has taken so far have not crossed red lines. Administration officials so far have appeared determined to press on with military and political support for Israel following the deadly Hamas attack it endured last October, while also pressuring its ally to avoid a full-scale military operation in densely Rafah. *—AP*

Egypt agrees to send aid trucks to Gaza

TEL AVIV, 25 MAY

Egypt said Friday it has agreed to send United Nations humanitarian aid trucks through Israel's main crossing into Gaza, but it was unclear if they will be able to enter the territory as fighting raged in the southern city of Rafah amid Israel's escalating offensive there. *—AP*

UVALDE SCHOOL ATTACK

Microsoft, Meta, Call of Duty maker sued

UVALDE, 25 MAY

Families of the victims killed in a school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, have filed two wrongful death lawsuits: one against the firearm manufacturer and another against two technology companies, Meta and Microsoft, for their alleged role in marketing the weapon used.

Friday's pair of lawsuits came on the second anniversary of the school shooting, one of the deadliest in United States history.

The gunman, 18-year-old Salvador Ramos, attacked Robb Elementary School on 24 May, 2022, and killed 19 children and two teachers, leaving 17 more people injured. The defendant in the first lawsuit, filed in the Uvalde County District Court, is Daniel Defense, a Georgia-based weapons manufacturer that produced the rifle the gunman used. The second lawsuit, filed in the Los Angeles Superior Court, takes aim at Meta, owner of the social media platform Instagram, and the video game company Activision Blizzard, a subsidiary of Microsoft. The complaint alleges that Activision's first-person shooter game Call of Duty played a key role in shaping the gunman's mindset. It pointed out that the game bases its weapons on real-life models, and that the gunman played the game since he was 15 years old.

On 24 May, 2022 attack 19 children, two teachers were killed and 17 people were inured killed **PHOTO: X/@CHINESEPOP**

Call of Duty "creates a vividly realistic and addicting theater of violence in which teenage boys learn to kill with frightening skill and ease", the lawsuit said. That, in turn, led the attacker to seek out the gun he used in the video game as soon as he turned 18, according to the suit.

It also alleges that the gunman consumed pro-gun marketing on Instagram that reinforced the violent imagery he saw in the video game. "Simultaneously, on Instagram, the shooter was being courted through explicit, aggressive marketing," the families said in a statement.

The lawsuit accuses Instagram of failing to exercise adequate oversight over its platform, thereby allowing weapons sellers to have "an unsupervised channel to speak directly to minors, in their homes, at school, even in the middle of the night".

—Al Jazeera

Reliance seeks approval for $8.5B Viacom18-Star merger

Reliance & its affiliates will hold 63.16% stake in the entity

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani-promoted Reliance Industries has sought approval from fair trade regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI) for the USD 8.5-billion merger of Viacom18 and Star India Pvt Ltd (SIPL).

"The proposed transaction aims to combine the entertainment businesses (along with certain other identified businesses) of Viacom18, part of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) group and SIPL, wholly-owned by The Walt Disney Company (TWDC).

The proposed transaction will not cause any appreciable adverse effect on competition in India, RIL said in the notice.

However, to facilitate the CCI's assessment, they have identified several key markets where horizontal overlaps were significant such as licensing of audio visual content rights, distribution of broadcast TV channels, provision of audio visual (AV) content, and supply of advertising space in India.

SIPL is engaged in a range of media activities, including TV broadcasting, motion pictures and operation of an OTT platform. It is a wholly-owned entity of US-based The Walt Disney Company (TWDC).

Viacom18 is engaged in the business of broadcasting of television (TV) channels, operation of an over-the-top (OTT) platform, in India and worldwide. It is also engaged in the business of production and distribution of motion pictures. In February this year, global media giant Walt Disney Co and Reliance Industries announced signing of binding pacts to merge their media operations in India to create a Rs 70,000 crore (USD 8.5 billion) behemoth.

After the successful completion of the deal, it would create the biggest firm in the Indian media and entertainment sector, with over 100 channels in several languages, two leading OTT platforms and a viewer base of 750 million across the country.

Nita Ambani, wife of Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani, will chair the joint venture, while Uday Shankar will be the Vice Chairperson.

Reliance and its affiliates will hold 63.16 per cent stake in the combined entity, while Disney will have the remaining 36.84 per cent shareholding. Reliance has also agreed to invest around Rs 11,500 crore into the joint venture to grow the OTT business.

—PTI

It aims to combine entertainment business with Reliance **PHOTO: PTI**

- Viacom18 is engaged in the business of broadcasting of television (TV) channels, operation of an over-the-top (OTT) platform, in India and worldwide. It is also engaged in the business of production and distribution of motion pictures

RELIANCE POWER REPORTS ₹397 CR LOSS IN Q4

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Reliance Power Ltd on Saturday reported a consolidated loss of Rs 397.66 crore during the March quarter, mainly on account of increased cost of fuel consumed.

It had posted Rs 321.79 crore profit in the year-ago period, the company said in an exchange filing. The company's total income, however, increased to Rs 2,193.85 crore from Rs 1,853.32 crore a year ago.

Among expenses, its cost of fuel consumed increased to Rs 953.67 crore during the quarter from Rs 823.47 crore in the January-March period in 2022-23.

The board of the company also "approved authorisations of members for issuance of foreign currency convertible bonds (FCCBs) and securities through qualified institutional placement (QIP). These shall be in terms of rules, regulations, guidelines, and laws, including Securities and Exchange Board of India". Reliance Power has close to 6,000 MW of operational power generation assets. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

WTO MEMBERS SEEKS INDIA'S REPORT ON SUGAR SUBSIDIES

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

A group of WTO member countries, including Brazil, Canada and the European Union, have urged India to submit timely notifications on sugar subsidies in the World Trade Organisation, an official said.

The issue came up for discussion during the meeting of the WTO's agriculture committee on 23-24 May in Geneva.

These countries are also major sugar exporters like India and they allege that support measures by India distort global sugar trade.

Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Paraguay, New Zealand, the EU, and Guatemala have "urged India to submit timely notifications on the subsidies", the Geneva-based official said.

India has stated that the Indian central and state governments neither paid for nor procured sugarcane from farmers, as all purchases were made by private sugar mills, hence, this information was not included in its notifications of domestic support.

In its appeal, India has stated that the WTO's dispute panel ruling has made certain "erroneous" findings about domestic schemes to support sugarcane producers and exports and the findings of the panel are unacceptable". *—PTI*

NEW GUIDELINES

Don't share real time data with 3rd parties: SEBI

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has introduced new regulations on Friday to govern the sharing of real-time share price data with third parties, including various online platforms.

SEBI has issued guidelines to curb the misuse of such data, particularly by online gaming platforms, apps, and websites that offer virtual trading services or fantasy games based on the movement of real-time share prices of listed companies.

To address these issues SEBI has issued various guidelines to the Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs)--including stock exchanges, clearing corporations, and depositories--and registered market intermediaries.

SEBI said that MIIs and market intermediaries must ensure that real-time price data is not shared with any third party unless necessary for the proper functioning of the securities market or regulatory compliance.

The new guidelines will come into effect 30 days after the issuance of the circular, said SEBI.

According to SEBI the market price data can be shared for investor education and awareness without any monetary incentives, but this data must be delayed by one day.

Meanwhile, SEBI has announced a modification in the minimum duration of the staggered delivery period for commodity futures contracts.

This change comes as part of SEBI's ongoing efforts to enhance the efficiency and reliability of the commodity derivatives segment.

Previously, this duration was not explicitly specified, leading to varied practices across the segment.

This change will be effective from 1 July, and will apply to all contracts where the staggered delivery is scheduled after this date.

SEBI has directed all recognised stock exchanges and clearing corporations to inform their members of these new provisions and to ensure the information is prominently displayed on their websites.

—ANI

PHOTO: PTI

Power demand hits new high of 240 GW

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

India's peak power demand hit the season's new high of 239.96 GW on Friday, due to soaring mercury levels in various parts of the country, which compelled excessive use of cooling appliances like air conditioners and coolers.

As per power ministry data, the peak power demand met or the highest supply in the day, was recorded at 239.96 GW on Friday, which is the maximum so far in the summer season this year.

On Thursday, it was 236.59 GW, while on Wednesday, the peak power demand was at 235.06 GW, as per power ministry data.

The all-time high peak power demand of 243.27 GW was recorded in September 2023. The record is expected to be broken during this summer season.

Earlier this month, the power ministry projected a peak power demand of 235 GW during daytime and 240 GW during daytime and 235 GW during evening hours for June 2024.

Earlier in March this year, India Meteorological Department (IMD) projected that India is likely to experience a warmer summer and more heatwave days this year, with El Nino conditions predicted to continue at least until May. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

NTPC PRODUCES RECORD ELECTRICITY IN FY24

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Public sector power generator NTPC posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 6490.05 for the fourth quarter of 2023-24, up 33 per cent from Rs 4871.5 crore in 2022-23. The standalone total income of the company for the financial year stood at Rs 1,65,707 crores, as against the previous year's total income of Rs 1,67,724 crores. The consolidated net profit was up by 24.5 percent from 5208.87 in the December quarter, the Ministry of Power added in a release on Saturday. The total income of the group for FY24 was Rs 1,81,166 crores *—PTI*

DEAL CONCLUDES

India plays key role in Intellectual Property Organisation's new treaty

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Members of Geneva-based World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) have concluded an agreement under which it will be mandatory for patent applicants to disclose country of origin or source of genetic resources if the claimed invention is based on those materials or associated traditional knowledge.

The treaty will provide additional protection for Indian genetic resources and traditional knowledge. Although these are currently protected within India, they are prone to misappropriation in countries, which do not have disclosure obligations.

The current patent legislation does not have a mandatory provision requiring patent applicants to disclose the country of origin or source in case where the invention is based on genetic resources.

At present, only 35 countries have some form of disclosure obligations, most of which are not mandatory and do not have appropriate sanctions or remedies in place for effective implementation.

The new treaty was adopted on 24 May at the WIPO headquarters in Geneva after 192 countries and 86 observers participated in the two-week negotiations from 13-24 May at a Diplomatic Conference.

For the first time, the connection between local communities and their GRs and ATK is recognised in the global IP community.

Most of the developed countries generate IP by using these resources and knowledge for research and innovation.

The WIPO is the global forum for IP services, policy, information and cooperation. It is a self-funding agency of the United Nations, with 193 member states.

The members include both developing and developed nations like India, Italy, Israel, Aregbrtina, Austria, Bhutan, Brazil, China, Cuba, Egypt, Pakistan, the US and the UK.

—PTI

PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: PTI

MARKETS ARE AT ALL-TIME HIGH DESPITE PRESSURE

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The selling pressure in the Indian markets persists with the FPI (Foreign Portfolio Investment) selling during May standing at Rs 17,848 crore so far this month. Data from the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) shows that the net FPI investment is negative for May.

The highest selling pressure was seen in the equity markets, where FPI investment was negative for the second consecutive month.

However, the Indian markets improved in the last two trading sessions, and the net FPI inflows on Friday stood at Rs 5,490.73 crore, according to the NSDL data. Both Nifty and Sensex also touched all-time highs in the last two sessions.

The experts highlighted that the FPI outflows caused by election and geopolitical uncertainty, good returns in China equity markets, the U.S. Fed pause on rate cuts, and elevated Indian valuations in short term exerted pressure on Indian markets.

FPIs were net sellers in Indian stocks amid the geopolitical crisis in the Middle East, which pushed investors to take money off their portfolios. In April, the net FPI outflows were Rs 16,260 crore, while in the equity market, the investors sold stocks worth Rs 8,671 crore. *—ANI*

I-T dept notifies inflation index for current fiscal

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The income tax department has notified the Cost Inflation Index for the current fiscal beginning April 2024, for calculating long-term capital gains arising from sale of immovable property, securities and jewellery.

The Cost Inflation Index (CII) is used by taxpayers to compute gains arising out of sale of capital assets after adjusting inflation. The CII for financial year 2024-25, relevant to assessment year 2025-26, stood at 363, Since prices of goods increase over time resulting in a fall in the purchasing power, the CII is used to arrive at the inflation adjusted purchasing price of assets so as to compute taxable long-term capital gains (LTCG). *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

India's chemical market to hit USD 29.7B

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

India's chemicals market, currently valued at USD 220 billion in 2023, is forecasted to soar to USD 383 billion by 2030. This growth is underpinned by an 8.1 per cent anticipated CAGR from 2021 to 2030.

As the sixth largest globally by chemical sales, India has attracted significant foreign direct investment (FDI), with cumulative FDI inflows reaching USD 21.7 billion from April 2000 to September 2023.

The sector benefits from 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route, bolstering investor confidence and facilitating growth.

PHOTO: PTI

India's Petroleum, Chemical, and Petrochemical Investment Regions (PCPIRs) are expected to attract investments worth USD 420 billion, reflecting the sector's robust potential.

Additionally, the establishment of seven Central Institutes of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology (CIPET) and the Institute of Pesticide Formulation Technology (IPFT) will drive skill development, ensuring a skilled workforce to support the industry's growth.

The chemicals market in India is set to witness substantial growth across various metrics. In 2024, the value added per capita in this market is projected to be USD 20.6, with a value added margin of 21 per cent.

Employment in the chemicals sector is projected to reach 1 million by 2024, supported by a CAGR of 3.19 per cent over the forecast period.

The employment rate within the sector is projected to be 0.07 per cent, with labor efficiency and productivity expected to be USD 143,000 and USD 29,700, respectively.

Within the elemental sub-sectors, specialty chemicals, agrochemicals, and petrochemicals are expected to witness substantial growth, with CAGRs of 11.5 per cent, 8.3 per cent, and 11 per cent respectively, until 2027. *—ANI*

FUTURE OF LOVE

How Bumble is pairing AI & humans for connection

UNITED STATES, 25 MAY

Lidiane Jones, chief executive officer of Bumble, enters BBC's Executive Lounge to talk about a decade of dating tech, and navigating the dangers and responsibilities of AI.

Using artificial intelligence (AI) to find true love may seem counterintuitive. But at Bumble, a dating app committed to helping people find authentic connections,

What role should AI play when in dating apps?

Our users are looking for authentic connections, and I believe AI also has exciting potential related to safety. Within the first two months of launching the Deception Detector, reports of spam, scam and fake accounts decreased by 45 per cent. We're able to use AI techniques to discover certain patterns, and it's a good use of AI that serves a unique customer need.

Also, creating profiles, especially in the beginning, can be overwhelming at times. And according to our research, 66 per cent of Gen Z and millennial daters say they would use AI to assist them in creating or bettering their dating app profile. Still, I don't want to incorporate AI into Bumble experiences just for the sake of it. I really want it to function as a coach, helping users to express their authentic selves.

Bumble is committed to help people find authentic partners **PHOTO: BBC**

- Users are looking for authentic connections, and I believe AI also has exciting potential related to safety. Within the first two months of launching the Deception Detector, reports of spam, scam and fake accounts decreased by 45 per cent

What do you think biggest challenge in technology?

What we have seen these last three or four years is that the pace of change is accelerating – in technology, macroeconomics and geopolitical climate. The biggest risk is not embracing these changes.

The world we live in is ever-changing, so leaders must stay current with customers' needs. Leaders who are the most adaptable and flexible are going to fare a lot better over the next 10 years. I think we're going to see a dynamic leadership change in the industry because those are the skills that are going to help companies rise.

How do you plan to maintain the competitation?

There are a few things that have made Bumble stand out these last 10 years. The first is our stance on kind connections, which has guided our community guidelines.

For example, we have a high bar for how people treat each other on our platform. So, when we say healthy and equitable connections, we mean it. *—BBC NEWS*

Busy Bee Airways withdraws bid for Go First

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

More than three months after jointly bidding for Go First, travel portal EaseMyTrip's CEO Nishant Pitti on Saturday said he was withdrawing the bid for the bankrupt airline.

Busy Bee Airways, majority-owned by Pitti, along with SpiceJet Chief Ajay Singh, had put in a bid for Go First, which is undergoing an resolution process.

Pitti said after careful consideration, he decided to withdraw the bid for Go First in his personal capacity. The latest move also comes less than a month after the Delhi High Court allowed lessors to take back 54 planes leased to Go First. On 26 April, Pitti had said he will consider any necessary adjustments to its proposed offer for the grounded airline after reviewing the court order.

Meanwhile, Pitti's announcement about the withdrawal of the bid also comes a day after EaseMyTrip on Friday reported a consolidated loss of Rs 15.07 crore for the March quarter and a full-year profit.

Go First stopped flying on 3 May, 2023, and its plea for voluntary insolvency resolution proceedings was admitted by the NCLT on 10 May last year.

Go First shuttered operations due to financial woes caused by persisting issues with Pratt & Whitney engines that had resulted in the grounding of its aircraft. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: INDIA_ALLSPORTS

Natasa Stankovic, Hardik Pandya Getting Divorced?

MUMBAI, 25 MAY

Rumors of Natasa Stankovic and cricketer Hardik Pandya's separation have been making headlines for the last few days. The two tied the knot in May 2020 amid the coronavirus-induced lockdown and are parents to a 3-year-old boy named Agastya Pandya. Their separation rumors surfaced online after netizens noticed that the model removed the 'Pandya' surname from her Instagram handle. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Bharali Wins Gold In World Youth Weightlifting

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Assam's teenage weightlifter Bedabrat Bharali won the gold medal in the men's 73kg at the IWF World Youth Championships in Lima, Peru. The 17-year-old Bharali finished 12kg clear of his competitors with a total lift of 296kg (136 in snatch and 160 in clean and jerk). Last year Bharali, an Asian youth champion, finished third in the 67kg category. Ryan McDonald from the United States finished second with an effort of 125-159-284 while Serhii Kotelevskyi of Ukraine was placed third on 130-153-283. *—PTI*

Gambhir v/s Cummins in high-stakes Final

CHENNAI, 25 MAY

Tactician par excellence Gautam Gambhir couldn't have envisaged a battle of brains with a more different kind of adversary than the smiling yet ruthless Pat Cummins as Kolkata Knight Riders face a spirited Sunrisers Hyderabad in a mega IPL final here on Sunday.

Marquee sporting clashes always pit one leader against another but this IPL final will be about Gambhir's brain, which is always ticking against a captain who has transcended boundaries to turn into a leader of men.

Somewhere along the line, KKR's Shreyas Iyer, who is playing his second final as captain, has turned into a bit of a side-show as a global cricketing royalty in Cummins faces an IPL czar in Gambhir.

A decade ago, no one would have placed a bet on Cummins being a captain and winning the ODI World Cup, World Test Championship, and Ashes in a space of six months, and now, leading SRH to their maiden IPL title would be the icing on the cake.

"A very practical guy, very humble, very empathetic to his fellow teammates and coaching staff.

He is into the statistics and gets the information that he needs against a particular opposition in certain conditions," SRH assistant coach Simon Helmot described the skipper in a nutshell after the team's win against Rajasthan Royals in the second Qualifier.

"He doesn't waste time in (team) meetings. Our team meeting today was 35 seconds. But, a lot of information has already been spoken about," he said.

The two teams met in the first qualifier in which KKR outwitted SRH with clever bowling plans on a massive Motera ground and in Chennai, Iyer's men will again start as favourites.

The last time KKR played an IPL final in Chennai was against Chennai Super Kings in 2012 in one of the most epic contests, which established Gambhir's credentials as an astute leader of men.

—PTI

India awarded silver, and bronze in F46 javelin

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

India was on Saturday awarded the silver and bronze in the men's javelin throw F46 event after winning a protest against second-place finisher Dinesh Priyantha Herath of Sri Lanka at the World Para Athletics Championships here.

Rinku Hooda and Ajeet Singh on Friday finished third and fourth respectively in the men's F46 javelin throw final but the result was put on hold after India protested that Herath was ineligible to compete in the category.

In para-sports, athletes are classified with similar levels of physical ability to allow fair competition.

The F46 classification is for athletes with arm deficiency, impaired muscle power, or impaired passive range of movement in arms, with athletes competing in a standing position.

"He (Herath) was not classified properly and did not belong to the F 46 category," said an official from the Paralympic Committee of India.

India got a favorable decision and Herath was disqualified. Rinku, who originally finished third with an effort of 62.77m, was upgraded to second while Ajeet (62.11m) was handed a bronze.

"We won the protest against the Sri Lankan, who had also won gold at the Tokyo Paralympics, that he should not have been eligible to compete," head coach Satyanarayan told PTI.

—PTI

Rinku Hooda PHOTO: PTI

ARCHERY WORLD CUP

Indian women's compound archery team strikes gold

YECHEON, 25 MAY

The Indian women's compound team of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Parneet Kaur, and Aditi Swami grabbed its third successive Archery World Cup gold medal, while the mixed team added a silver at the stage two event here on Saturday.

The world number one Indian team dominated Turkey's Hazal Burun, Ayse Bera Suzer, and Begum Yuva right from the first end and sealed the gold without dropping a set, maintaining a healthy six-point margin (232-226) in a lopsided final.

Jyothi, Parneet, and world champion Aditi this completed a hat-trick of World Cup gold medals together.

They had won the season-opening World Cup Stage 1 in Shanghai, downing Italy last month, and also ended last year with gold at stage four of the event in Paris. Asian Games champion Jyothi, however, failed to add a second gold to her kitty as she along with Priyansh squandered an opening round lead to go down to the USA's Olivia Dean and Sawyer Sullivan by two points (155-153) in the compound mixed team final.

In the compound women's team final, the second-seeded Indians began with three Xs (arrow near the center) and dropped one point each in the next three arrows to edge out their fifth-seeded rivals by one point in the first round.

—PTI

Archers Aditi Swami, Jyothi Surekha Vennam, and Parneet Kaur after winning women's compound team gold in South Korea on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: PTI

Malaysia's Masters final: Sindhu wins 88-minute contest

KUALA LUMPUR, 25 MAY

Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu on Saturday earned a shot at the Malaysia Masters crown after making it to the women's singles finals with a come-from-behind win over Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrungphan here.

Fifth seed Sindhu, who has not won a title in two years, rallied her way to prevail 13-21 21-16 21-12 against world number 20 Busanan in a marathon semifinal that lasted 88 minutes to close in on the BWF World Tour Super 500 crown at the Axiata Arena.

Sindhu had won the 2022 Singapore Open and finished runner-up at Madrid Spain Masters last year.

It was her 18th win over Busanan, who has beaten the Indian only once in her career way back in the 2019 Hong Kong Open.

World No. 15 Sindhu, who will eye her third Olympic medal at the Paris Games in two months, now faces second seed and world no. 7 Wang Zhi Yi of China in the summit clash.

Sindhu had lost to Wang at the Arctic Open last year but has defeated the Chinese twice in three meetings.

A silver and bronze medallist in the last two editions of the Olympics, Sindhu seemed to have found her mojo back as she dished out some attacking badminton this week after looking out of sorts since making a comeback from a knee injury early this season.

It has been a while since Sindhu defeated the big guns such as Carolina Marin, Tai Tzu Ying, Chen Yu Fei, and Akane Yamaguchi -- whom she is expected to come across during the Paris Olympics.

—PTI

FRENCH OPEN BATTLE BEGINS

PLAYERS TO WATCH OUT FOR

MEN'S SINGLES

*WORLD RANKING

NOVAK DJOKOVIC (1)*
Right-Handed, Two-Handed Backhand
COUNTRY: SERBIA AGE: 36

Aces:	First serve:
1,273	66%
Break points converted:	**Service games won:**
45%	82%

Return points won: 44%

RAFAEL NADAL (305)
Left-Handed, Two-Handed Backhand
COUNTRY: SPAIN AGE: 37

Aces:	First serve:
989	70%
Break points converted:	**Service games won:**
49%	84%

Return points won: 47%

ALEXANDER ZVEREV (5)
Right-Handed, Two-Handed Backhand
COUNTRY: GERMANY AGE: 27

Aces:	First serve:
1119	66%
Break points converted:	**Service games won:**
43%	79%

Return points won: 41%

CARLOS ALCARAZ (3)
Right-Handed, Two-Handed Backhand
COUNTRY: SPAIN AGE: 21

Aces:	First serve:
214	65%
Break points converted:	**Service games won:**
44%	81%

Return points won: 44%

DANIIL MEDVEDEV (4)
Right-Handed, Two-Handed Backhand
COUNTRY: RUSSIA AGE: 28

Aces:	First serve:
271	51%
Break points converted:	**Service games won:**
40%	77%

Return points won: 40%

WOMEN'S SINGLES

IGA SWIATEK (1)
Right- Handed
COUNTRY: POLAND AGE: 22

Aces:	First serve:
54	67.5%
Break points converted:	**Service games won:**
47.5%	82.4%

Return points won: 49.3%

ARYNA SABALENKA (2)
Right- Handed
COUNTRY: BELARUS AGE: 26

Aces:	First serve:
137	63.1%
Break points converted:	**Service games won:**
46.2%	63.6%

Return points won: 44.1%

COCO GAUFF (3)
Right- Handed
COUNTRY: US AGE: 20

Aces:	First serve:
103	60%
Break points converted:	**Service games won:**
55.5%	58.8%

Return points won: 50.5%

JESSICA PEGULA (5)
Right- Handed
COUNTRY: USA AGE: 30

Aces:	First serve:
30	61.2%
Break points converted:	**Service games won:**
45.8%	69%

Return points won: 45.6%

HISTORY

The story starts in 1891 with the creation of the "French Clay-Court Championships." This tournament was only for players who were members of French clubs. The event took place at different locations, including the Stade Français, Parc de Saint-Cloud. The star of this period was Max Decugis, who won 8 times between 1903 & 1914.

The first major change happened in 1925 when players from other countries started to compete. Despite this, French players still dominated the competition. After the death of Roland Garros, one of the best aviator in the world, the French Open arena was named after him. Since then it is also popularly known as Roland Garros. This is one of the four Grand Slams.

WHERE TO WATCH

SONY liv

SONY CHANNEL

DATE OF THE MATCH: 26 MAY - 9 JUNE

ABOUT THE COURT

Clay surface is the slowest playing surface and it produces higher bounce. These courts are best for baseline players, and for those who are good at drop shots. The court is made of fine red brick dust, crushed white limestone, clinker (residue from coal), crushed gravel.

SOURCE: ATP AND WTA

RESEARCH: BAREERA ANJUM, SYEDA RAHILA, ARFA TAYABA KHAN